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The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Tuesday, February 25, 2020****Members Present**

Hon. Frederick Blake Jr, Mr. Bonnetrouge, Hon. Paulie Chinna, Ms. Cleveland, Hon. Caroline Cochrane, Ms. Green, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Lafferty, 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

DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms. Semmler): Welcome, everybody. Orders of the day, item 2, budget address. Minister of Finance.

Budget Address

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Speaker, the Northwest Territories is a land of opportunity. We have a vast geography, a wealth of resources, and a population strengthened by incredible diversity.

The 19th Legislative Assembly wants to see the Northwest Territories make the best possible use of all of our opportunities and resources, including the strength of our people, to achieve the 22 priorities that were set by all 19 members of this Assembly. These priorities stretch across all of our communities and are our shared vision for economic growth, environmental stewardship, and a healthy and better educated population.

[Translation] Achieving these priorities will be a continuing journey that will outlast the life of the 19th Assembly, and this government must make decisions in a way that looks beyond four years to the next generation. We have a responsibility to put the Northwest Territories on the good path using our priorities as a guide and establishing a budget and a fiscal plan to achieve as much distance towards these priorities as possible. [Translation ends]

It has been said that it is easier to destroy than to create. Think about an ice sculpture. Creating takes time. It requires patience. It succeeds with thoughtfulness and planning. This government wants to create a positive path forward for the future.

Budget 2020 is a first step on a path towards our priorities, one for which we build relationships within our government, with our communities, and between governments.

This budget proposes to spend almost \$1.9 billion on programs and services in the coming year and sets out further fiscal steps that will support progress on all 22 priorities. This budget is a foundation upon which we will create and build.

Shortly, I will review the Northwest Territories economic situation and outlook. I will describe some key drivers in our economy as well as some of our challenges. Next, I will discuss our fiscal situation and strategy, which speaks to some of the direct impacts that government can have towards positively influencing our economic situation. I will then describe our planned revenues and expenditures for the next fiscal year and conclude with a discussion about next steps for the financial health and planning of the Northwest Territories.

I want to make two comments about how this budget was prepared.

First, this budget was a collective effort. It stretches back to the last Assembly, when departments were working on their plans for the coming year. We are always building on work from prior Assemblies in a consensus government. In the relatively short time of four months since this Cabinet was formed, we have tried to chart, of course, a more inclusive approach to financial policy setting that better engages all Members. It is my intention to continue establishing opportunities throughout our processes for public dialogue and engagement with this Assembly. Evidence-based decision-making requires information and perspectives, and potential decisions should, where possible, be vetted by those impacted.

I want to thank all Members of this Assembly for their constructive ideas and work in building our financial plan for the next fiscal year and beyond.

Second, in preparing this budget, we needed to take a realistic look at our fiscal challenges. Our immediate fiscal situation is not what was hoped in the last budget, but it is manageable. We are not in a crisis. This is a time for cautious optimism. Achieving the priorities of this Assembly will require a disciplined approach and a plan to ensure that we are getting value for the money we are spending while preserving the ability to responsibly fund infrastructure needs in our communities and across the territory. Although this is next fiscal year's

operating budget, the revenues projected in this budget must also partially pay for the 2020-2021 capital budget that was approved last fall. More importantly, we must remember that we are on a longer journey and that the first step taken in today's budget sets the direction for the financial plan over the next four years. Within our budget, we remain committed to responsible fiscal management.

Just as this budget is meant to provide a stable starting point for the future of the 19th Assembly within a context of change, our approach to financial management is changing progressively to deliver a better product to serve the goals of this government.

Part of this change includes the use of four-year business plans instead of an isolated annual version each year. We will regularly return to the business plan to evaluate our progress and performance so that we will know if we are getting the results and value we expect for the money we spend.

We will also be focusing resources to improve evaluation and monitoring of key performance measures across sectors and programs. Many of the programs and services that government delivers cannot be measured purely by numbers. Much of what we do provides a social return that is going to need a more nuanced measure. Our goal is to ensure not only that residents of the Northwest Territories get the best monetary value for their dollar but that they get a positive social, cultural, educational, health, and economic return on our collective investment.

Economic Outlook

The financial foundation for all our priorities is a vibrant and diverse economy. The Macroeconomic Policy Framework is a set of measures used to assess the territory's economic performance over time. It shows the economy has not recovered to its pre-recession peak in 2007. We know that circumstances have changed since then. Political and economic uncertainty across the world can significantly impact our small, resource-based economy.

In 2019, the Northwest Territories economy is expected to have shrunk 4.3 percent due to declines in diamond production and private-sector investment. Increases in government investment expenditures helped cushion the slowdown in private sector activity and saved the economy from a more severe decline. Government infrastructure investments are the prime driver in a 3.4-percent increase in total private and public investment from 2019 to 2020. This year, economic growth is expected to improve, with real gross domestic

product forecast to increase 3.8 percent. However, this growth will only partially offset the GDP decline from 2019, leaving the economy still smaller than it was two years ago. In short, the Northwest Territories economy is stable, but it is not growing.

Economic stability does not describe the longer-term outlook. The diamond mining industry has been our economic engine for the last two decades. However, the industry has matured, and all existing Northwest Territories diamond mines could be closed by 2030, with the first one ceasing operations within the next five years. Possible expansions may allow one or more of the diamond mines to continue to operate, but that remains uncertain, just as there is no certainty of finding new economically viable deposits. The closure of the diamond mines will result in a large drop in economic output, and there are no other confirmed projects on the horizon large enough to fill this gap.

The role government can play in supporting economic growth should not be underestimated. Strategic infrastructure investments are key to supporting future economic growth and to supporting our people to be the drivers of that growth. The Canadian economy is in the midst of restructuring towards a more digital and service-centred economy, and we want the Northwest Territories to be contributing members as this evolves. The GNWT has already invested in the basic infrastructure for a more digital economy with the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Link that gives better access to the global digital economy and countless new opportunities for Northerners. Government spending on programs, goods, and services will provide stability to the economy by supporting northern businesses, local wages, and household consumption. Public infrastructure investments such as roads, bridges, power corridors, and communications networks, as well as schools, hospitals, and community facilities will contribute to higher standards of living for Northerners and to improved private sector business cases for future investments. Investing in physical and social infrastructure sets the Northwest Territories up for economic growth tomorrow. We will be guided by the principle that the expenditure of our public funds maximizes economic benefits to residents and local economies and supports northern business.

Fiscal Situation and Outlook

Madam Speaker, our fiscal situation is not dire. However, unexpected revenue declines mean that the previous fiscal strategy objectives to increase fiscal capacity and eliminate the cash deficit were not achieved.

We are expecting our operations budget from 2019-2020 to show a deficit of \$70 million. Although this is quite a distance from the \$60-million operating

surplus projected in last year's budget, over one-third of the revenue loss is due to a re-allocation of federal transfers for infrastructure projects from the 2019-2020 fiscal year to 2020-2021.

In 2020-2021, our operating budget is projected to show a surplus of \$203 million. Over the next four years, we are currently projecting that average annual revenue growth will be greater than operating expenditure growth, which allows us to project operating surpluses for the entire Assembly. However, after this year, the operating surpluses will start to decline, dropping to \$147 million in 2021-2022, \$116 million in 2022-2023, and then to \$3 million in 2023-2024.

An operating surplus is only one part of our total financial picture. The operating budget is mainly the funding of day-to-day programs and services provided by government. The capital budget is where we show the funding of large-scale investments in infrastructure projects. Without a surplus in our operating budget, there is no cash available to put into our capital budget to pay for infrastructure investments. The less cash available from an operating surplus, the more we would have to borrow to continue to invest in capital projects.

In the not-too-distant past, the Government of the Northwest Territories made large investments to help connect our communities with improved transportation networks such as highways, roads, bridges, and airports. Large public investment has enhanced energy and communications infrastructure and built health facilities and schools. Despite these efforts, the Northwest Territories remains in a significant infrastructure deficit compared to much of the rest of Canada. Many communities have no road access, limited internet connectivity, and rely on diesel to generate heat and power. Several of our communities have small and aging school facilities that accommodate only one or two teachers to cover classes from kindergarten to grade 12. The Northwest Territories' core housing need is among the highest in Canada. Surpluses in the operating budgets are not large enough on their own to support the kind of large-scale investments we need to catch the Northwest Territories up to a similar level of infrastructure seen elsewhere in Canada. Borrowing has been and will remain necessary to make strategic infrastructure investments.

Remaining fiscally responsible includes managing our debt. Our debt level is approaching the federally imposed borrowing limit of \$1.3 billion, and current projections show that we will be over that limit by 2021-2022. The Department of Finance uses a variety of measures to assess our debt level and ensure that we continue to use debt responsibly. We have the fiscal capacity to handle higher debt levels, and discussions are underway with Finance

Canada to raise the limit, to provide more flexibility for long-term planning.

Fiscal Strategy

When it comes to developing our fiscal strategy, our focus is on the future.

What we want is the ability to enhance fiscal resources to advance the 22 priorities of this Assembly.

First, using today's current estimates, the fiscal strategy provides an initial allocation of \$25 million over the life of the 19th Assembly to advance towards our mandate priorities, starting with \$10 million in 2020-2021. Over the next few weeks, we will be working with Members to allocate this funding.

Second, we will continue to build on our relationship with the federal government to take advantage of funding opportunities to advance our priorities, such as housing investments. We will also be looking for more flexibility than the usual 75/25 approach to cost-sharing.

Third, we will seek opportunities for collaboration with other governments to advance shared priorities. This government does not want to compete for resources with other organizations within the Northwest Territories. We will work with Indigenous governments across the Northwest Territories to advance projects that benefit all of our people.

Finally, we are looking for creative low- or no-cost initiatives to improve fiscal planning, including four-year business plans, to bring the longer-term horizon into view, and we will rely on increased program evaluation to bring more value for our dollars spent. The GNWT will undertake strategic reviews to ensure programs and services are meeting expectations and that budgeted expenditures for these programs are properly aligned with our mandate and all additional revenue options are considered.

Further, we are seeking an increase to the borrowing limit, for better flexibility while maintaining a level of debt that is affordable. We have already begun to engage the federal government and remind them that the NWT is a fiscally responsible jurisdiction, with much opportunity but also longstanding gaps. We can only succeed in increasing the limit if we demonstrate responsible and strategic spending. Investments will need to be modest and reflect our expected revenue growth over the next four years.

From a fiscal perspective, we believe that more effective and sometimes more flexible use of our existing programs and services will provide better

value for the public money that we are spending. We expect to improve performance while reducing costs so that we can free up fiscal resources to help close the infrastructure gap that exists across our communities without overreliance on debt.

Tax Measures

The cost of living is high in the territory, especially within small communities, where average incomes are lower. Budget 2020 introduces no new taxes. We will be reviewing our tax regime in tandem with standing committee, and we are developing a plan to engage the people of the Northwest Territories in a dialogue about government revenues. Together, we will continue to explore ways to increase our own-source revenues without an undue burden on our residents and businesses.

The Northwest Territories is at the forefront of climate change, with the impacts of rising average global temperatures being more pronounced here than in other parts of the world, affecting permafrost, ice road seasons, and forest fires. Carbon pricing was developed as a response to the federal proposal and implemented as part of a made-in-the-North approach to encourage greenhouse gas reductions.

Effective July 1, federally mandated carbon tax rates will increase to \$30 per tonne of greenhouse gas emissions as part of our legislated commitment to carbon pricing under the pan-Canadian framework. This means a tax-rate increase of 2.3 cents-per-litre on gasoline and 2.7 cents-per-litre on diesel fuel. In lock-step with the carbon tax increase, the cost-of-living offset will increase to \$156 per year for an individual and \$180 per year for a child, on July 1. The cost-of-living offset payments are made quarterly, except for single individuals, who will receive a lump sum in July because their quarterly payments would be less than \$50.

Budget 2020 proposes almost \$11 million in spending for residents and businesses for the cost-of-living offset, heating rebates, large emitters' rebates and grants, and rebates for electricity producers, to mitigate the impact on the cost of living due to the carbon tax.

Expenditures

Madam Speaker, we propose to spend \$1.896 billion in this budget.

We mapped out the proposed budget, starting with the blueprint of last year's budget. Departments worked hard to find \$15 million to reallocate. We also partnered with the federal government for \$29 million in new federal funding for some projects. This effort gives us the flexibility to fund \$94 million in additional spending.

We are investing \$39 million of this new spending in our public service to conclude the last collective bargaining agreements. The remainder of the additional funds are proposed to adjust departments' budgets to better match their spending needs, to deliver on partnership agreements with Canada, and to add \$6 million in funds for initiatives started in the last Assembly.

Based on current fiscal forecasts, we will set aside at least \$25 million over the term of this government to advance this Assembly's priorities. The proposed amount for 2020-2021 will be submitted through a supplementary appropriation after the main estimates have been approved by the Assembly. We will be more collaborative and more strategic in how we approach delivering on our mandate that comes from this Assembly's priorities.

Providing quality health care and social services that are comparable to what other Canadians receive will always be a key consideration in budget planning. The Department of Health and Social Services has a proposed budget of over half-a-billion dollars, with \$18 million of enhancements and adjustments introduced this year. Budget 2020 includes \$10 million for supporting well-being through the recently amended Northern Wellness Agreement with the federal government. This means more health and wellness programming in our communities in collaboration with Indigenous Services Canada.

With the opening of the Stanton Territorial Hospital last year, we have created a facility that will serve us for many years and will be administered through an agreement with Boreal Health Partners. More functions are becoming operational, and Budget 2020 proposes adding \$2.6 million for a wide range of operations in ongoing funding. This funding will support 51 positions to help patients, including 15 behavioural health workers, nine positions in the medicine unit, five staff for processing medical devices, four positions in each of the emergency triage department and day procedures units, and three for rehabilitation services. Through partnership and collaboration with the federal government, we are leveraging our ability to provide healthcare, and this budget delivers \$2.1 million in spending over several areas of health. These include mental health and addictions, home and community care, cannabis awareness, emergency treatment, climate change and health adaptation, improving wellness and aftercare plans for cancer patients and survivors, supporting our participation in the Pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance, and enhanced seasonal flu monitoring.

There are infrastructure deficits across all of our communities. Infrastructure includes all of the physical structures needed to support our programs and services. Our hospitals and health facilities

care for people to get back on their feet. Our schools provide the space for education received by students. Our roads allow all residents and businesses the ability to grow our economy by moving goods and labour to where they are in demand, while also allowing ambulances and first responders quick access to emergencies. Transportation links us across this territory through a network of airports and runways of not only concrete but also ice on rivers and lakes. Our laboratories, warehouses, parks, fire monitoring stations and towers, and all other government buildings and assets are ultimately to support the health, safety, and well-being of our people.

We have a rich, diverse, and expansive terrain which creates a challenge for serving our many small communities. The territory continues to lag the rest of Canada in terms of infrastructure with the oldest average age in the country. By investing in the territory, infrastructure has the ability to lower the cost of living and develop the economy at the same time by creating multiple benefits across several sectors and departments to make the Northwest Territories a better place to live and work.

The Department of Infrastructure has a proposed budget of \$275 million, which includes \$10 million of new spending this year. As part of a larger strategy for care, 72 new long-term beds at the old Stanton hospital will be supported with \$4 million of new funding. Proposed spending enhancements of \$2.2 million provide for operations of new buildings, including the new Stanton hospital, the Hay River fish plant, biomass heating plants in schools in Hay River and Aklavik, and a laboratory and warehouse in Fort Simpson. Investment in the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway has increased the use of the Dempster Highway from Kilometre 0 to 272 of Highway 8, and Budget 2020 proposes an enhancement of \$659,000 for ongoing upkeep to support people seeking adventure in our spectacular North. This budget introduces a permafrost data management and analytical system for both highways through Transport Canada funding under the Northern Transportation Adaptation Initiative for \$390,000.

There is a proposed \$250,000 to support the Lafferty ferry over the Liard River and Ndulee ferry over the Mackenzie River. Resources from the federal government's Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund to address climate change will allow us to allocate \$2.4 million in the infrastructure budget, with \$300,000 put towards increased funding for the Arctic Energy Alliance and its programs which would bring its total funding to \$5.8 million. The remainder will go to approved projects that get underway this year.

Given the investment of previous Assemblies, a proposed \$4.5 million is recommended for the Department of Finance for interest costs related mainly to short-term borrowing, which has advanced our ability to take advantage of cost-shared capital funding offered by the federal government to invest in the territory's infrastructure with favourable financing.

Finance, working with several other departments, is improving the way NWT residents and businesses can access government services through a better and expanded online portal that covers a range of departmental services. Budget 2020 proposes \$337,000 to complete the implementation of a single, secure online portal for existing services across departments, and to bring 40 more licences and permits to the platform.

The people of the Northwest Territories have a proud history as stewards of the land. We all share a responsibility to ensure our environment is healthy for present and future generations. Budget 2020 introduces additional funding of \$8 million for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources within a proposed budget of almost \$100 million. In an ongoing effort to establish protected areas, this Budget allocates \$175,000 of additional funding to monitor more candidate area sites. An additional \$2 million is proposed to support our forest fire suppression air tanker fleet to be better prepared for wildfire outbreaks. As part of the environmental assessment of the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway, \$45,000 is proposed to fulfill commitments to support the wildlife monitoring program that will expand our understanding of the impact of roads on wildlife, and can be applied to future projects.

Budget 2020 allocates Environment and Natural Resources with \$1.4 million for conservation and recovery of the Bathurst and Bluenose-East barren-ground caribou herds.

There is \$960,000 to support boreal caribou range planning in Budget 2020 under the conservation agreement with the federal government, with \$897,000 proposed under Environment and Natural Resources and \$63,000 under the Department of Lands. Budget 2020 also recommends \$3.5 million in funding for advancing activities under three challenge nature fund agreements with the federal government, much of which is for the GNWT and Indigenous governments to collaboratively establish, manage and monitor Thaidene Nene and Ts'ude Niline Tuyeta, which are new territorial protected areas and Dinaga Wek'ehodi, which is currently a candidate protected area. These four-year agreements, with a total of \$11 million in funding, will also support the conservation economy and job creation in small communities.

Budget 2020 includes \$23 million for the Department of Lands for ongoing work to manage, administer, and plan for the sustainable use of public land, fairly and transparently, to reflect the interests of our people now and for generations to come.

The Department of Justice delivers the Integrated Case Management program. ICM breaks down silos with project collaboration between Health and Social Services, Education, Culture and Employment, Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority staff, the Stanton hospital, and the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. It is an example of government re-imagining existing resources to support better outcomes for people. It empowers them with knowledge and is an innovative solution that delivers results.

Most of the people accepted in the program have gone through a life-changing crisis before admission, and 70 percent of them live with mental health challenges. Many program participants are referred to the program to address housing needs, a foundational aspect of the program. More than half of them are experiencing homelessness or precarious housing. Pathfinders are the backbone of the program. They work alongside clients, help navigate systems, and even sit in on appointments between clients and government service providers. The outcomes for participants are tangible, such as secure housing, as well as the intangible, such as the self-confidence it gives participants who gain greater independence once they understand how to effectively access the supports they need. ICM is also tasked with identifying barriers that participants have faced so that departments can collaborate to remove those barriers for all service users. Budget 2020 allocates \$827,000 towards ongoing funding to make ICM a permanent program. The participating departments will move forward together to make the best use of the knowledge and experience about accessing government programs that is being gathered through this program.

Budget 2020 also proposes \$240,000 for the Victim Services program that directly funds entirely to community-based organizations that provide victim service supports.

A strong education system for all stages of childhood development is one of the cornerstones on which to build the future of the Northwest Territories. Budget 2020 proposes \$340 million in spending for the second largest department, Education, Culture and Employment. Budget 2020 continues to implement the specialized territorial support team for schools with \$319,000 in new funding for mental health and speech and language specialists, bringing the specialist team to five members. This budget continues to improve the

Northern curricula with \$129,000 of new funding to support resource development about Northern issues and to create assessment tools for credential recognition of this curricula beyond our borders for students applying for post-secondary opportunities, and also to provide training for our teachers to deliver this material. Budget 2020 also proposes an ongoing funding increase for education authorities of \$269,000 for student transportation to catch up with actual expenditures.

Another successful and innovative program that is expanding is northern distance learning. Funding of \$604,000 is proposed to bring northern distance learning to five more schools, and provide access to more students, as well as enhancements and funding for the equipment needed. Northern distance learning harnesses technology to improve student learning opportunities across all of our communities with videoconferencing and online tools linked to high schools in regional centres. The program is helping high school students achieve academic success without having to leave their home community.

To support the processing of information requests related to day school settlement records, \$129,000 is dedicated to a student records coordinator. This coordinator will help former day school students get the compensation to which they are entitled under the March 2019 class-action suit settlement with the federal government.

The GNWT is dedicated to creating a prosperous and sustainable Northern economy and the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment has a proposed budget of \$60 million to that end. Spending proposed in Budget 2020 includes an increase of \$758,000. To promote economic growth, Budget 2020 is proposing \$250,000 to support implementing socioeconomic agreements that will facilitate mine developments in the Dehcho and Tlicho regions. To promote economic diversity and nurture a growing tourism sector, \$176,000 is dedicated to support increased activity in the Beaufort-Delta region from Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway traffic, and \$92,000 is dedicated to improving public safety along the Ingraham Trail for aurora viewing in North Slave parks.

The responsibility of northern governance and decision-making often spans more than one department, and that includes offshore oil and gas negotiations. Budget 2020 puts forth \$825,000 to support resource management under the Pan-Territorial Vision for Sustainable Development, with \$705,000 allocated to the Department of the Executive and Indigenous Affairs and \$60,000 for each of Environment and Natural Resources and Industry, Tourism and Investment.

The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is proposing a total operating budget of \$109.2 million in 2020-2021 to support the corporation's mandate, which includes \$4.2 million of additional spending to promote housing partnerships, homeownership, and the preservation of the public housing program.

During the term of the 19th Assembly, the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation will continue to work with 33 communities towards the development of Community Housing Plans that include local and community-based strategies and solutions to guide the adaptation of existing housing and the development of future housing in each community.

Further, the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation will work with people currently in public housing who may have the resources to become homeowners through the new home program and through the sale of public housing. We will also address housing affordability through the Canada Housing Benefit, a new national portable housing benefit program designed to address housing affordability.

We recognize the need for an increased supply of affordable housing in the territory. To move forward, we look to housing partnership programming such as the community housing support initiative that will support local and Indigenous governments and community partners in developing unique housing approaches. Additional opportunities can be found in the National Housing Co-Investment Fund, with a \$60 million allocation for the Northwest Territories housing projects.

Recognizing the great need of people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, we are developing the GNWT homelessness strategy to ensure that the GNWT investments in and actions on homelessness are aligned, consistent, and effective.

Having set a foundation for government operations, I would like to say a few words about our immediate next steps.

The next task is to review and analyze how we use this \$1.9 billion budget not only to deliver good governance day to day but also to advance initiatives in support of the 19th Legislative Assembly's priorities. To do this, we will take a "whole of government" approach and try to avoid pitting one set of needs against another. We must find ways to advance all of our priorities, recognizing that different regions, communities, and people within those communities will have different needs. Recognizing and balancing the many needs of a diverse society is one of the roles of government. It is a challenge but also an opportunity to showcase consensus government by working with all Members of this Assembly.

We will also be working on a more consistent approach to evaluate programs and services. All departments will be involved in performance measure development and monitoring to ensure that we are getting optimal returns on our investments. We expect that a more systemic approach should help achieve more value from the expenditures and improve evaluation of our service levels. Last, but far from least, we will change the way that the government does business.

There will always be risks in the world. Our government recognizes that there are risks around us and challenges ahead. We acknowledge that our economy has slowed, our fiscal resources are limited, and much of our physical and technological infrastructure still needs to catch up to the rest of Canada. National and international conditions are continuously changing. However, having acknowledged those risks and challenges, we believe that changing our approach on how to deliver government services will help us prepare for whatever new challenges the future may bring.

We will not be afraid to take risks because risk is where the opportunities arise. We will not be stalled in fear that decisions, proposals, solutions, or new programs may not deliver as hoped. We will have the courage to start taking measured risks with incremental evaluation of our efforts. We will remain engaged with our residents in order to be responsive and proactive. To achieve this goal may require a cultural shift to harness the ingenuity of our public service and our communities.

We will build a culture of creativity and innovation within our administration, our public service, and hopefully across the Northwest Territories. This does not require millions of dollars of new investment, but it will take relationships built on trust, communication, and respect. Fortunately, we start in a position of strength given the good work done today in and day out of our public service. The cultural shift will also need to start from the top with each of us in Cabinet and in the 19th Assembly leading with integrity and courage and solving problems creatively and collaboratively.

My commitment to this Assembly was a commitment to people, building relationships, and understanding the stories of others. I have learned that the budget process is a year-long endeavour, and with the shift to four-year business plans, it will be important to hear from different perspectives throughout our term.

While the message of Budget 2020 is largely one of stability, that is not the message of the 19th Assembly. The message from this Assembly is found in its priorities, and we will take measurable actions using a collaborative approach to achieve our mandate. This Assembly is one that listens to

each other and its constituents and will reach out to stakeholders for feedback. We may have differences of opinion, but these conversations are the true strength of consensus government.

Through collaboration, we will achieve more creative problem solving. With more creative problem solving, we can achieve more responsive and effective results. Establishing performance measures helps evaluate the success of our work so that our resources are used effectively. Making this approach the way we do business and govern will show the world that the Northwest Territories is a premier destination to live with a positive economic future; strong educational opportunities for our children; quality health care; a respectful approach to honouring our lands, water, and wildlife; and collaborative relationships with Indigenous governments based in our commitment to reconciliation. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Members, before we break for a short reception in the Great Hall, I would like to recognize a few visitors in the gallery. Mr. Anthony W. J. Whitford, former Commissioner, Speaker, Minister, Member, Sergeant-at-Arms, honorary clerk at the table; Mr. Tom Beaulieu, former Minister and Member; Mr. Kieron Testart, former Member; Patrick Gruben, chair of the Inuvialuit Development Corporation; Denny Rogers, the director of business development in Inuvialuit Development Corporation; as well as Patricia Chaychuk, clerk of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

We will now take a short break, and I welcome you all to the Great Hall for a reception.

---SHORT RECESS

SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr): Item 3, Ministers' statements. Item 4, Members' statements.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NORTHWEST TERRITORIES POWER CORPORATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MS. SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, on May 11, 2016, the Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Power Corporation announced that the GNWT would examine options for the future governance of the NTPC. As a first step, responsible Minister Louis Sebert revoked the appointments of the NTPC public board of directors and appointed a new board made up of GNWT deputy ministers. A press release issued that day said, "Appointing deputy ministers to the board will eliminate approximately \$1-million cost annually." Minister Sebert was also quoted as saying, "The

decision is a part of our government's broader work to address the cost of living. The GNWT continues to provide a significant level of direct financial support to NTPC, and the Auditor General has recently changed its accounting classification to recognize its more direct relationship to the government. Given these factors, it's worth examining governance options for the corporation."

When the 19th Assembly took office, the deputy ministers who were no longer working for the GNWT also ceased to serve on this NTPC board of directors. They were replaced on the board by a fresh crop of DMs late last year. On February 5th, the current Minister responsible for NTPC told this House, "They are actually not deputy ministers sitting on the board. They are actually regular people in there, working together with government with the Power Corporation."

Mr. Speaker, the last time "regular people" served on the NTPC board of directors was in 2016 when the government dissolved the public board. Under the previous government, deputy ministers were put on the NTPC board for a specific purpose, which was to carry out the task of determining government's options for the NTPC on behalf of the GNWT.

What I would like to know and what the people of NWT deserve to know is: what work has been done in this? Later today, I will have questions for the Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Power Corporation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EULOGY FOR MRS. RITA ROWE

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I would like to pay tribute to Mrs. Rita Rowe, a long-term resident of Hay River, who was surrounded by family and passed away peacefully on February 14th in Hay River. Rita was born on June 22, 1935, on a small farm in Lonesome Pine, Alberta, to Mary and Arthur Lockhart. She was the youngest daughter with 14 siblings. When Rita was just 12 years old, her mother passed away, resulting in Rita going to live with her sister in Edmonton.

At the young age of 16, Rita went looking for work, which found her on a plane heading to Yellowknife. Her adventure was just beginning. Her first job was working as a waitress at the Busy Bee Cafe, where she became lifetime friends with Patricia Rowe. Christmas arrived in Yellowknife, and Rita had no plans. Patricia suggested Rita spend Christmas at the Rowe house. This is where Rita met Bill, her

husband-to-be, and the rest is the journey of their life.

Rita and Bill were married on January 20, 1953, in Peace River; however, they lived in Berwyn, Alberta. While living in Berwyn, Bill and Rita travelled back and forth to Saskatchewan to work in the oil field. Soon after, they came North where they ran a garage and restaurant in Enterprise until it was destroyed by fire. It was then Rita and Bill decided to move to Hay River, where Bill had BJ Motors and Rita worked at raising her family of six.

In 1963, Rita was diagnosed with TB and, along with two of her children, had to go to a hospital in Edmonton for treatment. It was a very hard time for the family, but Rita always had a positive outlook on life. Rita worked tirelessly, volunteering with figure skating, Royal Purple, and hockey groups to ensure that goals were achieved and fun was had by all. Rita enjoyed organizing figure skating auctions to make sure ice time was paid for and that coaches were in place.

In 1976, Bill and Rita headed South to take over the Rowe family farm. Rita loved the farm and always had time to visit with neighbours, work the garden, and prepare for family visits. She instilled honesty, integrity, and hard work in each of her children. In 2013, Rita and her family proudly celebrated 100 years of homesteading on the farm.

Mrs. Rita Rowe is sadly missed by her family and the residents of Hay River. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Members' statements. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON TECK RESOURCES FRONTIER MINE DECISION

MR. NORN: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Today, I would like to share some remarks regarding the large oil sands mining project known as Teck Frontier, which, as of two days ago, has officially been withdrawn by Teck Resources Limited.

The news of this decision, in my view, is positive. The adverse environmental impacts that this project would have brought to our territory would have been felt for generations. We here in the NWT have always been feeling the impacts of the oil sands development for many years already. We have seen the impacts it had on our waterways, our interconnected lakes and rivers that flow from the Athabasca River in Fort McMurray, all the way north through the Slave River and into the Great Slave Lake. The water quality along these waterways has diminished. In some cases, the volume of water flowing through has decreased.

Along with these effects on water, there is also a major concern for the impacts to wildlife such as fish, moose, caribou, and others. These two areas of concern would have also exponentially impacted many nearby First Nations and other Indigenous groups to hunt and trap on their own land.

I believe that the withdrawal of the Teck Frontier Mine is a reawakening of corporate, social, and environmental responsibility for this country. Big business, especially multinational corporations, need to work with Indigenous governments all across Canada before any major projects are moved forward, to ensure that there are benefits for all parties that are impacted.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Alberta-NWT Transboundary Water Agreement should have played a larger and more active role in Teck Frontier Mine consultations. One of the core tenets of that agreement states clearly, among other main objectives, that both parties must work "to maintain the ecological integrity of transboundary water ecosystems." If Teck Mine had gone through with development, I seriously doubt that the ecological integrity of our lands and waters would have been upheld, which begs the question: if our government's participation in such agreements does not bear any fruit for our territory's interest, then why be a part of it?

I also have a problem with the lack of participation by Indigenous governments in enacting this water agreement. Why did they only receive "observer statuses" with this agreement as opposed to being fully active participants to this agreement? I see many problems with that approach, and I hope we can be more inclusive with our Indigenous partners when it comes to major decisions like this. Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. I will have questions for the Minister responsible shortly.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ARNICA INN TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROJECT

MS. CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, the 413-kilometre Slave Geological Province Road has a \$1 billion price tag. That is \$2.4 million per kilometre. For the cost of a quarter kilometre of road, we could have housed 42 of our territory's homeless.

Almost a year ago, the Yellowknife Women's Society began discussions with the City of Yellowknife and the GNWT about reopening the Arnica Inn to provide 42 transitional housing units for the homeless clientele of the Yellowknife Women's Society. The vast majority of these people

are Indigenous single men or women displaced from smaller communities across the NWT and Nunavut. Mr. Speaker, this project is a territorial project.

The proposed co-funding agreement was a partnership. It was proposed that CMHC would contribute \$2.6 million, the GNWT \$660,000, and the Yellowknife Women's Society would run the facility. The need for transitional housing is there. Seventy-five percent of the funding is there. The support to administer this project is there. Mr. Speaker, why are we not there?

In December, the housing Minister acknowledged that we have a housing crisis in the Northwest Territories. The government's newly minted mandate calls for an increase in adequate, affordable, and suitable housing and commits to working with partners to increase funding for housing programs. Despite this, application made by the Yellowknife Women's Society was denied by CMHC. Why? Because the GNWT does not support this project.

To make matters worse, this government failed to communicate with its potential partners. The GNWT has known about this project for almost a year. Every Yellowknife MLA was told of this plan during election. One hundred percent of us were in support of this project. Apparently, the GNWT has failed to support this project. Apparently, the Yellowknife Women's Society was not advised.

Apparently, keeping Members of this House adequately informed was also neglected. Based on the normal 20-year half-life of a building, this project would have provided housing for homeless people at less than \$60 a month.

Today, I want answers, Mr. Speaker. How did we get to this point? How did the housing Minister fail to adequately communicate with the Women's Society and Regular MLAs? Most importantly, why has the GNWT chosen not to support this project that would have housed 42 of our homeless for the cost of a quarter kilometre of road?

As the 19th Legislative Assembly, we committed to investing in relationships and better communication. Mr. Speaker, we owe better to each other and to the people we serve. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES-GOVERNMENT OF NUNAVUT
BARREN-GROUND CARIBOU MEETING

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I would like to thank the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources for the invitation to the GNWT-Government of Nunavut research and management meeting on barren-ground caribou that was held this past Saturday. There were many Indigenous government leaders at the meeting, including the Tlicho chiefs, Lutselk'e Dene First Nation chief, Yellowknives Dene First Nation chiefs, North Slave Metis Alliance representatives, and also leaders from Nunavut, including Premier Joe Savikataaq, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated Vice President James Eatoolook, and others. There were many staff and researchers from these organizations as well. Forgive me if I have not recognized everyone.

There were a series of technical presentations on the status of several barren-ground caribou herds, including Bathurst and Bluenose East, management proposals and recommendations, and some discussion of other issues.

It would have been helpful to have heard a little more about what is happening in Nunavut, especially with regard to habitat protection. It was very good to hear that the Government of Nunavut has proposed a harvesting moratorium on the Bathurst caribou herd to the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, as there continues to be up to 30 bulls taken each year on their side of the border.

General concerns were raised about communications and agreement to improve this within the Northwest Territories and across the border with Nunavut, too. A number of specific concerns were also raised. For example, it is not clear who and how decisions will be made around aerial shooting of wolves, should traditional harvesters not reach the desired targets. There was also frustration at the lack of progress on habitat protection and need for restrictions on industry, while harvesters have gone without caribou for more than five years.

I want to acknowledge that this was a useful continuation of the working relationships among Indigenous governments and public governments. There was also agreement to have further meetings with traditional harvesters and elders present, more information about the various plans and activities, and how they relate to each other.

I hope I can be part of that process. I will have questions later today for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources on some of the issues that arose at the meeting. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
ARNICA INN TRANSITIONAL HOUSING
PROJECT

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this Valentine's Day, when many people were receiving chocolates and flowers from their sweethearts, the Yellowknife Women's Society received a very bitter present indeed. The women's society was told by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation that they would not receive funding for a social housing conversion project dear to the hearts of many Yellowknifers and dear, also, to the hearts of the people in my riding of Monfwi. The Arnica Inn project would have provided small, self-contained apartments for 42 of the 338 disadvantaged people, Mr. Speaker, who are currently living without housing in Yellowknife. Many of them come from my hometown of Behchoko and Monfwi riding.

The reason the Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation turned down the application was that the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation was not prepared to contribute its required 25 percent of the capital costs, an amount totalling \$660,000. For that trifling sum, we could have leveraged upwards of \$4 million from the federal funding for homeless Northerners.

Our share spread over the project's 42 self-contained apartments, would have cost this government \$16,000 per unit. Mr. Speaker, you would think that a government that cares about homelessness would jump at such a great deal. Yet, astoundingly, the territorial housing corporation didn't respond to the society's request for support, let alone offer to help.

Mr. Speaker, this raises questions in the House, and from the public, as well, about the concerns of people living out on the streets in the capital city, Yellowknife. I intend to question the Minister of Housing at a later time regarding this very important matter for my constituents. Masi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
ARNICA INN TRANSITIONAL HOUSING
PROJECT

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am also going to hop on this train. The Arnica Inn: an example of how not to govern. By my count, every single Yellowknife MLA and my colleague beside me supported this project. During the election, the City of Yellowknife supported this project. In fact, I don't remember talking to a single person opposed to this project. Then, once we get elected, this

project seemingly does not go through because the GNWT did not support it.

Furthermore, I find out that we don't support this project due to the mayor and the executive director of the women's society informing me, and CMHC ultimately informing them. This was a clear breakdown in communication, Mr. Speaker. The Housing Corporation is a Crown corporation. It is supposed to be arm's length from government, but it is not supposed to be arm's length from the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation. It is not supposed to be arm's length from democratically elected Members of this legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I struggle to know why this occurred. I will have questions for the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, but I believe that there is a larger problem here. Our NWT Housing Corporation is extremely risk adverse. They are so afraid of the 2038 deadline on losing funding from CMHC that they fail to put new units on the ground. We speak of partnerships. We speak of ending homelessness, and this was a project that checked all of those boxes, Mr. Speaker.

We need a Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation who has a bold vision, who is willing to take the risks, and is willing to address our housing crisis.

It is now the responsibility of that Minister to repair the relationship with the Members who supported this project, to repair the relationship with the women's society, to repair the relationship with the City of Yellowknife, and most importantly, to give some hope to our most vulnerable citizens who, on the streets of Yellowknife, who come from all across this territory, that they will have housing, that there is some plan in place that ultimately addresses this.

Mr. Speaker, from where I was standing and where I stand now, this project made complete sense. I will have questions for the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
BEST PRACTICES IN GOVERNANCE OF
CROWN CORPORATIONS

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Crown corporations are set up to manage government enterprises that run like businesses. These government-owned corporations operate at arm's length of the government.

Both Northwest Territories Power Corporation and the Aurora College are established in legislation as territorial corporations. What else can they have in common? In both cases, Mr. Speaker, the GNWT has dissolved both public boards that was tasked on running them.

In May 2016, the Minister responsible for NTPC revoked appointments. The board of directors were replaced to save a million dollars to put towards cost of living for the people of the Northwest Territories.

In June 2017, the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment appointed an administrator to Aurora College. The website says the administrator would "temporarily replace the board and assume responsibilities."

Mr. Speaker, whenever the GNWT eliminates public boards or municipal governments or municipal council, or public governance structure, they are limiting the voice of the public. We also lose the expertise and the different perspectives of members of the public to bring forward to the boards that they serve on. This should be done with extreme caution for the shortest possible time period.

I question whether the main reason of pulling the NTPC board was to consider governance options or to save a million dollars. It has been almost four years now. What is taking so long, Mr. Speaker? When are they going to see the proof and the progress of the money that they're saving?

As for Aurora College, the termination of the expert hired to oversee the work makes me question whether timely progress is being made on that project, too.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT needs to move quickly to complete these reviews and let us know the governance models are going to be put into place. As a Member of this Assembly, we have to hold the government accountable in these positions. I'll have questions for the Premier at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Members' statements. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Hay River South.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize at this time Germaine Michel from Hay River. She is a chaperone here with a few of the Pages who are from Hay River South. I would also like to recognize the Pages, who are Rochell Sabourin and Joseph Arcand. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to welcome my constituency assistant who just started working with me, Mr. Vince Teddy. Welcome to the Assembly. I am really honoured to be working with him for the people of Nunakput, Mr. Speaker.

Also, I would like to welcome Dan Gruben from my home community of Tuktoyaktuk, and Denny Rodgers. Thank you, and welcome to the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Nahendeh.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize the deputy mayor, Cathy Kotchea, who is on her way up to the NWTAC meeting. She is from Fort Liard, and I think it's the first or second time she has been here, so I would like to thank her for being here. Thank you.

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

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize a constituent of mine, Mr. Denny Rodgers, and another, Patrick Dan Gruben. He was my constituent, and he moved to the other side, but I am hoping to get him back soon. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize Mr. Denny Rodgers, the administrator for Aurora College. He is doing a fine job filling in for the board and keeping us all accountable. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize Patrick Dan Gruben. He is a constituent of mine in Inuvik Boot Lake. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Great Slave.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to acknowledge Denny Rodgers, who is the chair of my department at the BDIC. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Members, I would like to welcome Mr. Anthony W.J. Whitford, former Commissioner, Speaker, Minister, Member, Sergeant-at-Arms, and honorary Clerk at the Table; also, my constituency assistant, Liz Wright; also Patrick Dan Gruben, chair of the Inuvialuit Development Corporation; also Denny Rodgers, director of northern affairs at the Inuvialuit Development Corporation; and Mr. Vince Teddy; also former Member, Kieron Testart. Also, if we have missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to the Chamber, and I hope you are enjoying our proceedings. It's always nice to have an audience with us. Thank you.

Item 6, replies to the budget address. Item 7, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 8, reports of standing and special committees. Item 9, returns to oral questions. Item 10, acknowledgements. Item 11, oral questions. Member for Kam Lake.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 76-19(2): ARNICA INN TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROJECT

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the housing Minister. I am wondering if the housing Minister can let us know when the Housing Corporation decided not to support the project of the Arnica Inn.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The project for Arnica Inn and the NWT Housing Corporation, I would like to elaborate on it a little bit, is that the Arnica Inn was advised to submit an application to CMHC. Once that application is approved and it's going forward, and it's supported by CMHC, NWT Housing Corporation would have followed up after.

We have gotten a letter from the CMHC that was addressed to the Yellowknife Women's Society, and they were given the instruction to resubmit their application and to fill the missing information that needs to be on that application and that would meet the affordability criteria for Yellowknife and that the long-term viability was not demonstrated. I would strongly encourage the women's society to go forward with the application and resubmit.

MS. CLEVELAND: Just so that I am on the same page, then, the government did not support the project of the women's society and have asked the women's society to resubmit their application?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Once the application is approved by CMHC, the application will now be supported by the NWT Housing Corporation. With the missing criteria, that has to be completed first because it is a federal program; it is not a territorial program. I would strongly advise the women's society to go ahead and look at their application, revise it, because they do have a deadline, and to contact our office, reach out to us, should they need us to go ahead and assist them in completing the application, as we did provide assistance before. I would like to strongly advise that the women's society reach out to the Housing Corporation.

MS. CLEVELAND: On the Housing Corporation website, I found a presentation that was delivered by the Housing Corporation president, called the National Housing Co-Investment Fund and NWT Housing Corporation. The presentation explained the co-investment fund to stakeholders and advised that the federal government would contribute 75 percent and we would contribute 25. Slide 4 of the presentation indicated that the Housing Corporation would help prepare applications. Would the Housing Corporation be prepared to help the women's society resubmit this application?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Absolutely. The Housing Corporation is in support of assisting the Yellowknife Women's Society to resubmit their application. I also just wanted to express that the Housing Corporation did enter into a partnership with them in December, and we did complete a women's shelter, and the Housing Corporation did contribute \$750,000, and the centre was opened prior to Christmas.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think what I would like to know for my final question is: does any GNWT department have an environmental assessment of the Arnica Inn?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: We have not. To my knowledge, I have not seen an environmental assessment, but I will follow up with my department to see if we have received anything in the time being. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 77-19(2): ARNICA INN TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROJECT

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. Along the same lines as the Member for Kam Lake, Arnica Inn has been on our radar since the election. September, October, we've heard it. Members,

these women here, have supported it going forward, so it's surprising that we are still talking about the process itself.

Mr. Speaker, the territory's 25 percent share of capital cost spread over the project, 42 self-contained apartments, also lists \$17,000 per unit. For the sake of people sleeping in apartment building stairways in Yellowknife or, even worse, outside, why did the Minister not jump on the chance to help provide those additional 42 transition housing units as badly needed today? Masi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to elaborate that the Arnica Inn currently was an ongoing conversation September and October, but my riding is the Sahtu. I was not familiar with the project at all, and I do come from a smaller community, where there are homelessness issues, throughout the Northwest Territories.

Going forward with the Housing Corporation, we do have several initiatives to work with that. Going forward, looking at the 43 units that were available, I believe strongly that there should have been more involvement, there should have been more communication. With the final submission of the application, I actually met with the Yellowknife Women's Society in December, and I advised them that I would like to see Indigenous partnership with the project, and I would like to see how is the project going to be integrated.

In the Northwest Territories, we are a government that does acknowledge Indigenous people. I would have really liked to see the Indigenous component. We did have a strong conversation, and, once again, I advised the Yellowknife Women's Society to reach out to us.

MR. LAFFERTY: Obviously, Members sitting on this side do not want to lose the hope of the federal funding that is available to us, should be available to us, but if we are talking about proposals, I am afraid we are going to miss out on the opportunity.

The Yellowknife Women's Society is a highly respected, extremely well-run non-profit agency that has been helping disadvantaged northern families for upwards of 30 years. It has extensive experience in transitional and emergency housing. If the Housing Corporation had problems or issues with the Arnica Inn project as the Minister alluded to earlier, why didn't it help the women's society to overcome those challenges as opposed to just plain ignoring those letters and emails that were going back and forth?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: I recognize that the women's society has well established themselves respectfully in the Northwest Territories. Going forward, the Housing Corporation does not have any issues with the project. Like I have said, we contributed into projects with them prior to Christmas, calculating at least approximately \$2 million. We have looked at the housing and homelessness initiative in the Northwest Territories.

Going forward, I have not seen the final application. I have not seen the business plan. It has not been shared with us, and I would strongly, once again, encourage the Yellowknife Women's Society to quickly reach out to us. They do have a deadline of March 31st or March 30th, I believe. Responding to the emails and the letters that were sent out, last week, we were travelling, and I wanted to solely concentrate on this issue. I wanted to look at it clearly and understand it.

As I said before, the project was not expressed in my campaign. It was not expressed in the Sahtu, but it is for the Yellowknife area. We do have seven MLAs within this riding. Looking at it going forward, I strongly encourage the Yellowknife Women's Society, because they have a deadline, to reach out and get their application resubmitted.

MR. LAFFERTY: That is the fear that I have right now, where we are not being proactive as the GNWT, reaching out to those organizations and assisting them in submitting the proposal, so we don't raise that issue in the House here. It should have been dealt with a long time ago. I am more concerned about those 42 homeless people today who do not have a place to go to. We are sitting around the table here, talking about the process. This is what we need to do. What is the Minister doing today that will benefit those individuals who are out there hopeless, no shelter, no food? What is happening today from the department's perspective?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: The application that was submitted by the Yellowknife Women's Society was submitted to the federal government. We don't see that application, so we don't know what the final ask was. When that application was put forward, I also did express to the Yellowknife Women's Society that they actually budget for renovation costs, should they come through, that they end up with a renovation that could cost millions of dollars, an environmental assessment that could cost millions of dollars.

The other thing that I would like to elaborate on is the age of the building, as well. I am not very familiar. In the letter sent from CMHC, they were concerned about the feasibility, and they did not elaborate on it. I really need to see that report because, if we open these 43 units and the building

is not feasible, what are we going to do as a government with 43 people who would end up having to evacuate that building within six months? Are we in a financial state to house 43 people who would end up on the street? The same scenario happened in Hay River with the high-rise burned, and none of the people who were in the high-rise were housing clients, but we did make an effort to get modular homes into that community.

That is my concern, but right now the urgency is to get that application submitted and get it in, put it in, because, if there is missing information, I would really honestly like them to include the renovation costs, should that end up becoming a problem in the future.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. Those 42 individuals who are homeless, obviously they don't want to hear about the paper trail, the process that needs to take place. They want to know what this government is doing to support them, to house them. Mr. Speaker, my final question is: what is the Minister doing to wake the Housing Corporation up to the human emergency that homelessness represents to the Legislative Assembly, our communities, and to all the people of the Northwest Territories, especially those who are homeless?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: The homelessness situation in Yellowknife has been addressed. We do work with what we can within the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. Right now, we are in the midst of our budget going forward. We have invested into the Bailey House here in Yellowknife; we have invested into the YWCA; and we have invested into the sobering centre. We do have the rent supplementary program that is also here. We have a number of programs and a number of facilities that we have invested into in Yellowknife, and we have taken the same approach.

This application going forward is nothing new to the women's society. They have been through this process before. Right now, there are issues with the building, and I would strongly advise them to resubmit their application so we can go forward with this and try to meet their deadline. However, in the time being, I would just like to make the Member aware that we do have a number of homelessness buildings in the community, and we have addressed them. I will provide the Member with a list of the buildings that we do have in Yellowknife. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 78-19(2):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES POWER
CORPORATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to just talk a little bit with my question. In 2005, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat released a review of governance framework for Crown corporations. That report said that, to be effective, boards of directors must approach their work objectively. It also talked about the independence that helps to establish a board's credibility and supports sound governance. It also talks about how best practice requires that boards of directors in Crown corporations function independently from management.

My question to the Minister responsible for the NWT Power Corporation is: if he feels that the Northwest Territories Power Corporation is following what the federal government considers best practices, why isn't GNWT following what's considered best practice? 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, and I thank the Member for telling me exactly where this quote was from. It's 2005 that they talked about best practices in moving forward. I have read the briefing on it. I can't tell you how the previous government made that decision. I can tell you what we are doing.

Right now, I am trying to make a decision based on a whole bunch of information. I have directed the board to come back with the governance model. Whether we stay where it is; do we go independent; do we go half-and-half; right now, we're working at trying to get the answer and get this information to us as best we can so that I can make an informed decision. Right now, that's the direction I've given the board, and right now, they're independent. They are six individuals sitting on the board. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. SEMMLER: If they are independent, are these deputy ministers receiving any additional bonuses or honorary or monetary compensation for serving on the NTPC board as they would as an independent, regular member of the territory? Or are they just getting their regular DM salaries, also meant to cover these additional duties?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: We are not giving them bonuses, and we're not giving them extra money. This is just part of their duties that they're being paid for, but they are doing work on weekends and evenings to do the job, because they have another job that they are doing right now.

It would be no different than any other board; they would actually do weekend and evening work. To the Member, we're not giving them any bonuses and we're not giving them any extra pay.

MS. SEMMLER: Okay. Well, so how does the Minister say that they are independent? If we have regular people on this board, they would be getting these honorariums so that they would be compensated, but we have staff. We have staff, Mr. Speaker, so can the Minister please try to explain that so I can understand it?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Right now, they are meeting as a board independent of their roles as deputy ministers. They are taking on the task of trying to govern the NWT Power Corporation as best they can with the information that they have. Again, right now, it's not costing us anything to pay them. We're not paying them to do that job. Right now, they're independent. Yes, they are DMs who were appointed, but they are going as individuals, not as DMs.

In your speaking notes, you talked about the DMs who were removed or replaced. We're fixing that. We're specifically talking about those people to do those positions right now. Right now, as we go and look at the governance model, we'll have an answer that may work better for everybody involved later on.

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

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister share with this House any progress made since 2016 on the governance options that these DMs were supposed to establish, and can he provide them to the Members or table the documents of the governance options? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: I actually met with the chair, and we've been having communications, and we are working on a flow chart of what we're doing. We're going to try to have that shared with committee as soon as possible; we're hoping by spring we will have this information to committee to be looked at so we can make an informed decision together.

Yes, we will share that information with you. I've already, like I said, reached out to the chair and the president and asked for that information to be tabulated so we can share it with committee moving forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 79-19(2):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES-GOVERNMENT OF NUNAVUT
BARREN-GROUND CARIBOU MEETING

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to once again thank the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources for the opportunity to observe the GNWT-Nunavut caribou meeting on the weekend. Can the Minister tell us whether there will be further meetings that include more harvesters, elders, interpreters, and presentations from communities and Nunavut organizations? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd like to thank the two Members from Frame Lake and Kam Lake for attending the meeting. That was greatly appreciated, them attending and listening to the concerns by the Indigenous governments and the Government of Nunavut and the GNWT. To make a short answer, yes, we are going to be having a follow-up meeting, both myself and the Premier/Minister from Nunavut. We made a commitment to do the meeting and have it in Kugluktuk as we work on it. Again, we are working toward that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that response. There was quite a bit of discussion around the GNWT-Tlicho Government joint management proposal for wolf removal in relation to the Bathurst and Bluenose East caribou herds at the meeting on the weekend. The proposal still cannot be found on the Wek'eezhii Renewal Resources Board website; I'm not sure why. Can the Minister tell us who will make the determination if aerial shooting of wolves is required and on what basis that decision will be made?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: I can't tell why that information is not on somebody else's board, but we did submit it to them, so we're working with them on that. So that the Member is aware, we are looking at the scientific and the traditional knowledge before we make a decision. We've looked at it. We've heard rumours -- not rumours, but we've heard from traditional hunters that wolves may not be as abundant as they are right now, so that may have an impact on it. We're hoping that the traditional hunting and harvesting will be done, and we will never have to use the aerial; but, if it needs to be done, that will be the department making that final decision.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. I hope it's the Minister who makes the final decision

and not the department. There was a lot of frustration at the meeting, particularly from the Dene communities that have shouldered the burden of actions to try to help with recovery of the Bathurst and Bluenose East caribou herds. They haven't been able to harvest those herds for a number of years now.

While I generally agree with the need for predator controls, virtually nothing has been done to protect habitat and slow down resource development. What is the Minister doing to protect habitat to ensure a more equitable and comprehensive approach to caribou protection that includes limitations or restrictions on resource development?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: The Bathurst Caribou Range Plan made nine recommendations to manage the range of the Bathurst caribou herd. Habitat conservation is recommended in areas of importance to caribou, such as key water crossings and land corridors. ENR is supporting Indigenous governments to document these key habitats and features. We will then work collaboratively to identify legislative tools to establish conservation areas. The Bathurst Caribou Range Plan recommends managing the total level of development on the range of the herd, including industrial development in communities and roads.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. It's clear to many that we cannot afford an all-weather road into the Slave Geological Province, and that it would likely be the final blow to the Bathurst caribou herd. If our government is actually serious about caribou protection and intends to fulfil its legal obligations under the Species at Risk Act, when barren-ground caribou are listed as threatened, an all-weather road through their range should not proceed in the absence of successful recovery efforts. Can the Minister provide any assurance that this government will actually back off the unaffordable Slave Geological Province road until there is a demonstrated recovery of the Bathurst caribou herd? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: I can't talk about another Minister's department, but what I can do is talk about what ENR is doing. We are committed to protecting the caribou population by making sure that our decisions consider any potential impact on caribou herds and their habitat. We make sure we understand that, and make sure we present the information to the boards and everybody else like that. We have a strong regulatory system in place. It ensures all projects are reviewed before permits and approvals are granted, and the department

actually does have comment on these projects moving forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 80-19(2):
ARNICA INN TRANSITIONAL HOUSING
PROJECT

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are also for the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation. In a couple of her answers today, the Minister suggested that there may be problems with the building. I would like her to elaborate on what she thinks those problems are. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was just referencing the feasibility study that CMHC had not recognized. I haven't seen the document, but then, that was one of the reasons why the application was -- I don't want to use the word "denied," because they are encouraged to resubmit. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: I find it very puzzling that there is no way of sharing information between the CMHC and the NWT Housing Corporation when both are anticipated investors in this project. What can the Minister do to obtain information that has already been filed with the CMHC so that she can independently evaluate it?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: I am not aware of the documents that have been filed with CMHC in regards to the federal application that was submitted, but I would like to really stress in this session that I would need the Yellowknife Women's Society to contact us so that we could go forward and we could resubmit that application.

With any other additional information in regard to the submission of the application, I would have to follow up with the Member. Right now, I'm not aware of any documents that the Housing Corporation has received as I have not seen the application myself.

MS. GREEN: I appreciate the answer from the Minister. In my mind, the premise of a co-investment fund is that applications are jointly reviewed and decisions are made, so I don't understand or appreciate the siloed approach between what goes to the CMHC and what goes to the Housing Corporation if both are requested to be investors in this project. What can you do to try and work more effectively with the CMHC so that you

have the same information at the same time that they have the information?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: The co-investment fund has been available to the Northwest Territories through the federal government process. Going forward, I would like to see both applications as well. I would like to be more involved, so I will direct my department that any co-investment applications going forward -- because this is a federal financial opportunity for the federal government to come up with 75 percent, and then the territorial government to come up with the 25. This is something where we'd be, as the Northwest Territories, able to go forward and in partnership.

My comment to the Member is that I will be more involved in the applications as they come forward, and I'd be more mindful of sharing those applications. Not sharing the applications, the ideas, that if they do have interest in another region and that they are looking at homeless initiatives or constructing new units, just so I can keep the Members informed of what is being constructed throughout the Northwest Territories.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Minister for that. Minister, you're going to need to be bossy with the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation to assert your right to see the information at the same time, to have a common evaluation method so that you can explain to us and to the public how decisions are being made about that co-investment fund. It was touted as a great bonus to this territory to have the \$60 million carveout, but if it turns out that we are in the back seat here, I don't think it will be as useful as we all hope it will be in creating new housing for vulnerable populations.

My final question is: how do you think that the Housing Corporation will evaluate applications in the co-investment fund to decide whether they are worthy of the GNWT investment? Thank you.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: I just want to inform the Member also that CMHC, currently, we have the lady that has been working for the three territories, Nunavut, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories. She is retiring this year. Right now, this position could possibly be relocated in the South, which, right now, is a conversation that I am having with the federal government to try to keep this position here in the Northwest Territories, so that we have access to the partnership and bringing the applications forward. That is going to be something that we're going to be challenged with going forward.

Also, evaluating the applications, I wanted to just advise the Member that we do assist in completing the applications with the client, but ultimately, it's up to the federal government whether they deny them or not, what their criteria are, and what they're looking at. We just get that after the fact, once they have reviewed the application. Right now, it's the feasibility and affordability of the unit. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 81-19(2):
HAY RIVER DIALYSIS UNIT

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Minister responsible for health a couple of questions. I am going to go to something that was brought up in the last Assembly, and it was to do with dialysis. In the North, it's an issue getting that service, and in Hay River, we have a dialysis unit, and it's kind of running at half throttle. We're looking after eight people when we can be looking after 16, and it's partly due to funding.

What I'm hoping the Minister of health -- I've got three questions for her. I'm hoping that the answers will just be one word, "yes," "yes," and "yes." We need something positive. We have to roll something out to the communities. I would ask the Minister of health if she is willing to have her department, commit her department, to work with the Hay River health authority to look at expansion of the dialysis? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. Our department is committed to working with the Hay River Health and Social Services authority, and actually, I was in Hay River last week, and I was able to go and have a look at the dialysis unit. The Member is right. It is under-utilized, so thank you.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: That's one yes. For the second yes, is she willing to direct her department to immediately start building a business case to make that happen?

HON. DIANE THOM: Second yes. We will commit to doing the necessary work.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: That wasn't too bad. The final one, so hopefully it will be a yes here. It is an easy question. Will the Minister of Health ensure that her department keeps me in the loop as well, and updated on what's happening?

HON. DIANE THOM: The third yes, and the Member gets what he wants.

MR. SPEAKER: This is easy, Member for Hay River South. Oral questions. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiiledeh.

QUESTION 82-19(2):

TECK RESOURCES FRONTIER MINE DECISION

MR. NORN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think I will get the same magic that my previous colleague just got, but I will give it a shot. My questions are to the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. It goes to my comments earlier from my Member's statement on the Teck decision to withdraw.

I want to speak a little bit about the transboundary water agreement with NWT and Alberta. I really thought about this for the last couple of days. I was really surprised at the amount of silence we had from that end of the Chamber. It concerned me because I know that if we had a large project in the territories and the water spilled the other way, and we had any sort of environmental impact going the other way into Alberta, I guarantee you the Alberta government would be saying something right now. I guarantee you some other government organizations would come back, and there would be some backlash to that.

My question to the Minister is: what benefits did the NWT receive as part of this NWT-Alberta Transboundary Water Agreement? Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. Does that answer it because it makes everybody happy? Sorry. What benefits? We have a relationship with the Alberta government, and we are able to work with them. We have the ability of first response on these issues. Again, when the quality, quantity, or the biology is an issue, we have to get the information first. We get that information, and we are able to work with the people of the Government of Alberta, to make sure this is it.

We have also been able to have correspondence and work together. I have already reached out to the Government of Alberta and the federal minister to make sure that these transboundary agreements are in place. We have that relationship. That is something we are able to deal with. As for the comment about other projects, if it was going south, I can't comment on that, because we don't do that. The water comes north from Alberta. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NORN: Thank you for the response, or kind of the lack of it. There was still silence and a lot of

radio silence from the ENR Department for this whole development. Going back to the agreement, in my research, I found out that the Indigenous governments largely have observer status. My question to the Minister is: are there any plans to have Indigenous governments play more of an active role moving forward with our transboundary water agreement with Alberta?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Indigenous governments and organizations are involved in NWT-wide, community-based water quality and monitoring programs, which includes 21 partner communities across the territories. Regular engagement meetings include the annual water strategy implementation workshops with water partners across the territories; seeking input on the monitoring program and aiming to build capacity for communities to take an active role in the water monitoring.

Just to make it real short and simple, we engage with Indigenous governments and communities. They are a part of this whole process. It is just not the department. It is actually the collective as the NWT. We actually do engage with them as we make decisions.

MR. NORN: Thank you for the response. You mentioned a little bit about monitoring. I guess my question is: does ENR have any funds earmarked for environmental monitoring as part of this transboundary water agreement?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: I may not have heard the question correctly, but I think we are talking about: do we have money that ENR helps with getting Indigenous governments involved? We do. We have funding for participants that includes honorariums, travel for the participants to engage in meetings, training sessions, and hands-on training opportunities. ENR involves community members in water monitoring programs as much as possible, including co-development of some programs, for example, the fish monitoring program for the Slave River.

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

QUESTION 83-19(2):

ARNICA INN TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROJECT

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In listening to the responses from the Minister responsible for NWT Housing Corporation regarding the Arnica project, it is clear the Minister does not understand the situation. The current agreement to purchase expires on March 31st. The CMHC turnaround time on a re-application is 300 days, Mr. Speaker. This project cannot go forward

on a re-application. My question is: will the Minister contact the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation and ask them to change their rejection of this project?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I have identified before, we are wanting to work with the Yellowknife Women's Society. They need to contact our office. They have received a response from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, I want to say, two weeks ago, maybe a week ago. They need to move quickly. They need to move fast. I do understand the dire need of homelessness and addressing the issue in Yellowknife. The longer they take to submit those documents and those papers, they are going to lose out on their own initiative. They should at least be able to resubmit that application so CMHC can have another look at the application and reconsider their decision. Also, the concern on the application was to look at the long-term viability of the units and also the affordable criteria. I would really like to look at that application that they submitted. Like I said, I haven't seen it, but going forward, I would really like to encourage the Yellowknife Women's Society to act fast. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JOHNSON: This is exactly the problem we run into. In the real world, real estate transactions have deadlines, and they can't fit into tight, bureaucratic processes. Therefore, there is a political will for this project to happen. Will the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation contact CMHC and clarify that we support this project?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the application being submitted to CMHC, like I said, CMHC has concerns regarding the long-term viability of the units and also the affordable criteria. These are stressed from CMHC. I would advise the Yellowknife Women's Society to contact our office so we can work with them and go forward from there. I am just thinking: the faster you act, the faster we would be able to submit these applications and go forward.

MR. JOHNSON: Once again, we seem to force the Yellowknife Women's Society to do all of the work, and we are not in a position to help them or assist them. My question is: have we committed to providing our 25 percent, our \$680,000 if that application is approved?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Depending on the outcome of this application, we will have to go forward. If it is submitted and it is approved by the Housing Corporation, we would have to find money alternatively within our budget. We have not

finalized our budget as of right now, today. Going forward, we are going to end up having to cut back on some programs that are being delivered currently. Going forward, we have to make sure that we would be able to find that money somewhere internally within our Housing Corporation within our budget. Once again, I would advise the Women's Society to submit their application so that we have something to go forward with. I need to see what it is that they submitted because I have not seen it today.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems I failed to get a single "yes" once again. Have we committed to providing our 25 percent should the CMHC change their decision and approve this? We said earlier that we support the project, but if we have not committed to providing the financial support, I don't understand how we can say we support the project. My question is: have we committed to both CMHC and the Yellowknife Women's Society that we will provide our 25 percent if the CMHC brings their 75 percent to the table?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: I know that the Member is very eager to hear a commitment from the NWT Housing Corporation, but, in reality, we need to make sure that we do have that 75 percent from CMHC, and I need to make sure that we are able to afford the \$650,000 that the Yellowknife Women's Society is requesting. We will be able to find it, but I just need to make sure that this application is approved by the federal government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 84-19(2):
BEST PRACTICES IN GOVERNANCE OF
CROWN CORPORATIONS

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, my questions are for Madam Premier because I want to ask about governance and the overall approach in governance in territorial corporations. Mr. Speaker, does the Premier agree that the territorial corporations should be run in accordance with the best practice principles in the governance of the government-owned corporations? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Honourable Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do agree that all organizations should be run on best practices. Thank you.

MR. JACOBSON: Good job. That is almost a yes, Mr. Speaker. Which practice principles do you feel are most important, and which could the GNWT improve upon?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I think that any human being who thinks that they are perfect is a fool, and I think that all of us and every organization needs to be constantly looking to improve upon this. Picking a model, though, is difficult. In the couple of minutes I was looking online, looking through different models of board governance, there are policy boards, there are policy governance boards, there are working boards, there are collective boards, there is a traditional model of governance, the Carver board of governance model, there is the cortex board of governance model, there is a consensus board of governance model, there is a competency-based board governance model. What I am saying is there is no one model that fits all. All the research that I have been doing says you need to fit the governance structure within the operations of the organization.

MR. JACOBSON: Do both Aurora College and the NTPC initiatives include the examination for the best practice and principles of governance to ensure that they are conforming to them?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I hope that all of our organizations and all of our departments and any of the corporations that we have are always looking to improve their services, looking to best practices. I do know that the Aurora College is moving into accreditation, which means that you will be looking at best practices all the time. My worry is that, when you are not accredited yet and you are moving into it, you still have areas that you need to work on.

I think that, yes, all of us should be working constantly towards making sure that our services are providing the best they can and that we are taking advantage of best practices, which, Mr. Speaker, tend to change quite often. Therefore, we also need to keep on top of the current practices.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Has the Premier issued the direction of discussions with Ministers Simpson and Thompson respectively about the completion dates of transformation of Aurora College and the polytechnic to develop a governance of options, and also NTPC?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I have not sat down and had direct conversations with both Ministers that were named, to say what kind of board you are doing and those kinds of things.

However, I was the education Minister before, and I know that education does have a timeline when they will be bringing in a board of directors. Ministers are responsible for appointing their boards, Mr. Speaker, and so, therefore, if they wanted a direct timeline, it's probably better to ask the relevant Ministers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 85-19(2):
TLICHO ALL-SEASON ROAD

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. I made a statement last week about the Tlicho Whati all-season road, and the amount of contracts, the hiring. I would like to touch on the percentage and ask questions pertaining to that. According to the numbers I shared in my previous statements, out of 137 workers onsite up to date, Tlicho were 36 percent of labour, 13 percent were northern hires, and a whopping 51 percent non-NWT hires; 49 percent of the labour force contracted to work on the Tlicho All-Season Road were NWT hires, and 51 percent outsiders.

Mr. Speaker, this should be totally opposite. We should be having more of a percentage than a southern firm, so I would just like to know, since this business is operating on the Monfwi Gogha De Niht'e boundary and outsiders are being given preference in hiring, what is the Minister doing to prevent this from happening? Masi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my understanding that the Tlicho Government was involved with the negotiation of the numbers and the quota for the Tlicho All-Season Road, so I cannot speak specifically to why those numbers were not as the Member would like to see. However, I believe, as the Cabinet and all of us together, all 19 of us together, have made retaining our government dollars in the North and maximizing them for the benefits of all residents of the Northwest Territories a priority that we are committed to, one that I am personally committed to, I think that the Member will see that, under a different direction of this Cabinet, we will be seeing more of those contract dollars staying in the North and looking at more of the indirect benefits of retaining northern businesses and Indigenous businesses. I cannot speak to why this one ended up the way it did. I was not part of that negotiation. However, I would be more than willing to discuss that with the Member going forward on future contracts, if he would like.

MR. LAFFERTY: I understand where the Minister is coming from. She was not part of the process, but she is the Minister today who can deal with this matter. There is an American firm operating at site. The money is going south. We are not benefitting from that in the Northwest Territories, the tax implications and so forth. Mr. Speaker, this is a very crucial issue that we need to deal with. We have experienced Stanton hospital. We have experienced major projects, Deh Cho Bridge and other places. We are still dealing with that in this House in 2020, Mr. Speaker. When is that going to stop?

Since the Minister alluded to the contract that was negotiated, the 19th Assembly government talked about being transparent and accountable. The names of the contract negotiated for the Tlicho All-Season Road project are blacked out on the document provided by the Minister's office to me. The Tlicho constituents would like to know who negotiated these contracts. When will the Minister demonstrate the required openness and transparency and provide a copy of the contract with the actual signatories' names on it so that I can share it with my constituents?

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: It's my understanding that that specific contract has gone through the ATIPP process. I do recognize that I need to get more information on why those specific signatories were blacked out. I do believe there are issues around privacy, of actually having the signature of people in documents that were provided so that they cannot be electronically copied. However, if it's an issue of that, then I would look into why the actual name itself is not provided. I will get that information and send it back to the Member.

When is this going to change? I can tell you it's going to change right now. I am a new Minister. I am changing the way my department is going to do things. It's going to take me some time. It would be very irresponsible for me to come in and start making changes before I have a better understanding of what's going on in my department, so, at this moment, I'm collecting my data, I'm gathering my facts, and I can guarantee you that the Member and all of the Members are going to see changes in the contracting system.

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

QUESTION 86-19(2):
ADMINISTRATION OF INCOME ASSISTANCE
PROGRAMS

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. My question is: for every dollar

we currently spend providing income assistance, how much do we spend in administration?

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The budgeted amount for the Income Assistance program in 2019-2020 was \$32 million. That being said, it's difficult to always estimate exactly how much we'll need, so there have been overruns of about \$2 or \$3 million every year, so say maybe \$35 million would be spent in 2018-2019. Of that, about \$6.5 million is for Income Security Program support. The other \$27 or \$28 million or so goes directly to clients. I'd also like to mention that we also have additional income security programs, such as the Senior Home Heating Subsidy, that also provides some income security. Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: Can I clarify those numbers I just heard? We spent \$6.5 million on administration, and then the remainder of the \$32 million is actually direct payments to clients? Is that correct?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: That's correct. That \$32 million is the budgeted amount. It's likely a couple of million dollars higher in actual payments.

MR. JOHNSON: By my calculation, we're spending about 20 percent for every dollar we give out on administration. Can the Minister clarify how many different Income Assistance programs there presently are?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: There is a distinction between income security programs and Income Assistance programs, and I believe, from earlier conversations with the Member, he wants to know about the Income Assistance program in particular. We have one Income Assistance program, and that program provides financial assistance to residents to assist with their basic and enhanced needs, which include shelter, food, utilities, clothing, childcare, as well as allowances for persons with permanent disabilities, or seniors.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My concern here is that we seem to be spending 20 percent on administration for every dollar we give out, and then we're requiring all of these people to monthly report. Do all of our Income Assistance programs require monthly reporting?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: We have the one program, and not all of the clients have to report monthly. If a client has an income that is steady and doesn't change month to month, or year to year, even, they can be put on a payroll system so that reporting can

happen every three months, six months, or 12 months, depending on how stable their income is. While most clients have to report monthly on income, a number of clients don't. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 87-19(2):
MODERNIZING THE PUBLIC SERVICE ACT

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Finance. As the Government of the Northwest Territories works to modernize the Public Service Act, what is the process for consulting key stakeholders, such as the Union of Northern Workers and the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before any proposed legislation comes forward, obviously, there needs to be a legislative proposal put together, and in the course of preparing a legislative proposal, there is a process convention that requires that an appropriate standing committee will see a copy of that legislative proposal. That's the early stages of all development of legislation. It will certainly not be our intention to deviate from that. It would be our intention to follow that process convention so that, when we are going through those early stages, the relevant standing committee would be involved. In that sense, the consultation of this House will take place.

Meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, as I believe I mentioned previously, the idea of modernizing the Public Service Act started two years ago. There was detailed research done. At that time, both unions were consulted at length, and they continue to be consulted now in terms of understanding where this idea might go. As far as it becoming a clearer process, that has to go through the same process as every other piece of legislation. A legislative proposal has to come forward first, go to standing committee, and only then does it go to Cabinet, after which a bill would be drafted. Then, of course, at that point, further consultation takes place.

MS. CLEVELAND: Has the Minister been in contact with the Union of Northern Workers or the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association recently, given that we are about to enter into new collective bargaining later this year?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: One of the very first things I did when I assumed this portfolio was to ensure that the relationship between the GNWT

and the unions was renewed, was strengthened. I am informed that, in fact, that relationship has been renewed, it has been strengthened, and that communications are ongoing about all of the matters for which we have to have many communications with the union, and that that continues to be, and, in fact, is increasingly, a positive relationship.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions.

Members, for tomorrow, just a reminder to always remember to speak through the Speaker. I know things were a little heated today, so I let things go, but for the future, just remember that. Thank you. Oral questions. Item 12, written questions. Item 13, returns to written questions. Item 14, replies to Commissioner's address. Item 16, tabling of documents. Minister of Finance.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 30-19(2):
MAIN ESTIMATES 2020-2021

TABLED DOCUMENT 31-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 16-19(1): PROMPT PAYMENT OF NORTHERN VENDORS

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents, "2020-2021 Main Estimates" and a "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 16-19(1), Prompt Payment of Northern Vendors." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 32-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 12-19(2): CANCER SCREENING, CARE AND PREVENTION IN THE BEAUFORT-DELTA

TABLED DOCUMENT 33-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 21-19(2): ADDICTIONS TREATMENT AND AFTERCARE ON THE LAND

TABLED DOCUMENT 34-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 29-19(2): STANTON TERRITORIAL HOSPITAL ISSUES

TABLED DOCUMENT 35-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 51-19(2): ADULT DAY PROGRAM FOR SENIORS IN YELLOWKNIFE

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I wish to table the following four documents entitled "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 12-19(2), Cancer Screening, Care and Prevention in the Beaufort-Delta;" "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 21-19(2), Addictions Treatment and Aftercare on the Land;" "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 29-19(2), Stanton Territorial Hospital Issues;" and "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 51-19(2), Adult Day Program for Seniors in Yellowknife." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Member for Kam Lake.

TABLED DOCUMENT 36-19(2):
LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
YELLOWKNIFE WOMEN'S SOCIETY TO
HONOURABLE PAULIE CHINNA REGARDING
DECISION AGAINST SUPPORTING THE ARNICA
PROJECT, DATED FEBRUARY 18, 2020

TABLED DOCUMENT 37-19(2):
EMAIL FROM MAYOR OF YELLOWKNIFE TO
HONOURABLE PAULIE CHINNA REGARDING
ARNICA INN PROJECT, DATED FEBRUARY 20,
2020

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table a letter dated February 18, 2020, from the executive director of the Yellowknife Women's Society to the honourable Paulie Chinna regarding the decision against supporting the Arnica Project. I also wish to table an email dated February 20, 2020, from the mayor of the City of Yellowknife to the honourable Paulie Chinna regarding the Arnica Inn Project. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Tabling of documents. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

TABLED DOCUMENT 38-19(2):
TREASURY BOARD OF CANADA SECRETARIAT
REPORT TO PARLIAMENT: MEETING THE
EXPECTATIONS OF CANADIANS – REVIEW OF
THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK FOR
CANADA'S CROWN CORPORATIONS

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table a report to the Parliament by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat entitled "Meeting the Expectations of Canadians – Review of the Governance Framework for Canada's Crown Corporations." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Tabling of documents. Item 17, notices of motion. Item 18, motions. Item 19, notices of motions for first reading of bills. Item 20, first reading of bills. Item 21, second reading of bills.

Item 22, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Tabled Document 12-19(2), 2019-2023 Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories; and Tabled Document 17-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2019-2020.

Members, by the authority given to me as Speaker by Motion 1-19(2), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily hours of adjournment to consider the business before the House, with the Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All right. I now call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of committee? Mr. Norn.

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 12-19(2), 2019-2023 Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All right. Thank you, committee. We will take a short recess and resume with that item after.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I will now call committee back to order. Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 12-19(2), 2019-2023 Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories, and we will return to page 15. Are there any further questions on the increased employment in small communities? Seeing none, committee, we will move -- all right. Madam Premier, we have agreed to being with the general comments on the mandate. Does the Premier wish to bring witnesses into the House? Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber. Madam Premier, would you please introduce your witness.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. On my right is Mr. Martin Goldney. He is the Cabinet Secretary and the deputy minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. We are on page 16, "Make strategic infrastructure investments that connect communities, expand the economy, or reduce the cost of living." Questions? Yes, Mr. Bonnetrouge.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Is it possible to go back to page 15, "Increase employment in small communities"?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Yes, we can. We'll go back; we're going to go back to 15, "Increase employment in small communities." Questions. Mr. Bonnetrouge.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. I'd like to ask about the working group. What is going to be the makeup of the working group for looking into creating employment for the small communities? Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. What we would do with the working group is we would, of course, have it interdepartmental, because we all have contracts, most of us; and the other thing, of course, is we would bring in some industry partners to provide advice, as well. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. BONNETROUGE: Thank you for that. Also, "Develop mentorship programs"; can you elaborate on that point, also? Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: The mentorship program? If you could ask the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Minister Simpson.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister for Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. The "Develop new mentorship programs to support emerging entrepreneurs" -- sorry, are we talking about the mentorship program or the apprentice? Oh, sorry, that's my mistake. The mentorship program is with ITI. You were right all along, Premier.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Mr. Bonnetrouge, could you please repeat your question?

MR. BONNETROUGE: We're all hard of hearing.

---Laughter

I was asking about the mentorship program, and I'm kind of wondering what that entails. What are they talking about when they're saying "mentorship program"? What will it look like, and what positions? Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister for ITI.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: As you can see in the mandate, this program will be developed going forward. I believe the idea is that we look at, say,

small businesses or certain types of industry where there are people accessing our ITI programs in order to provide funding to get their business going, or to learn some certain aspects of the business. We would be looking to create a program where we could partner up successful businesspeople or successful tradespeople, or whatever program it might be under, that we then can partner them to these entrepreneurs or these new emerging businesses, so that they can learn from each other; or mostly learn from the mentor. It is under development, and we would be open to feedback on what that looks like.

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

MR. BONNETROUGE: What you're stating there is to work with qualified tradespeople, but at the same time, too, you have to remember that, in our small communities, we don't have qualified tradespeople in the communities. I'm really wondering how that's going to work, or if it's even going to do any good for the small communities, unless you bring in a tradesperson from outside into that program.

I'm also looking at, you know, it's kind of ambitious and I'm really looking forward to this, the working group that is going to develop employment opportunities. Like, we're looking at fall of 2020, 30 new jobs. Is that 30 new jobs in each community? Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. That's 30 jobs that will be new; it's not 30 in every community. Some communities, like Colville Lake, I mean, having 30 new jobs there might be really difficult to achieve. There are jobs, though, that can be brought into it. I know that using, for example, the Housing Corporation, housing maintainers are jobs that should be, in my opinion, in every single community. Where we have an LHO, there definitely should be housing maintainers there, oil burner mechanics, electricians, et cetera. We might need to bring in some journeypeople, but I think that's our obligation, to be able to provide people with the skills that they need to succeed. I don't think I would be adverse to bringing in people who are needed.

In small communities, small businesses are a viable option. For example, one of our options is opening up the housing units, housing homes, so that they can do small businesses, and people who do, for example, traditional artwork and things, they might be great at doing the artwork, but are they good at doing business? In my opinion, a lot of them are underselling. Where do I sell those to? Do I sell them to the person who is coming off the plane, or do I get them into a major centre and actually put

them on a store shelf? Those are things that the mentorship program can assist with. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. BONNETROUGE: Thank you for that. It almost sounds like the employment in the small communities would hinge upon the Housing Corporation's LHOs. I know, right now, in my community, anyway, they're running two or three boiler systems in seniors' homes; you know, multiple boiler systems. Technically, you're required to have an operating engineer or OBM ticket, and we don't have that in our community. We haven't had that for the last four or five years, and we always have to rely on the outside communities. People are not comfortable with that.

We always saw employment opportunities, apprenticeship opportunities, within the NWT Housing Corporation, I think, since the early 1980s, when they were formed, and it was never, ever happening. I think one or two years, we had one plumber/gasfitter come out of there. I know we had three housing maintainers; I was one of the housing maintainers there, but we have not had any specific trades within. We had a carpenter lately, so we got two carpenters who are out and about working somewhere else now. I am looking forward to those kind of opportunities for our communities, especially within housing, to provide apprenticeship opportunities. I kind of look forward to that. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I agree that there are lots of opportunities. When I was the housing Minister a couple of years ago, I believe we only had 15 apprentices. That is not okay. If we have 33 communities, we can do better than 15 apprentices within housing. I did hear the Member say that there were no qualified journeymen, but I also heard the Member say that he has a housing maintainer, so we do have one person who is actually certified. We just need to convince that one person to take on apprentices. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier. Any further questions, Member for Deh Cho? Okay. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. My concern with this one is that it's being led by ECE, ITI, Housing Corporation, and ENR, four departments, and we all know the problem with silos. Will the Premier, commit to a report being

filed each fall deadline here of what those 30 jobs and in which communities?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, as part of the mandate commitment, we will be doing an annual review, and so we will put those statistics in there. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any further questions to "Increase employment to small communities"? All right. Seeing none, committee, we will move to pages 16 and 17: "Make strategic infrastructure investments that connect communities, expand the economy or reduce the cost of living." Questions? Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thanks, Madam Chair. I am wondering if the Premier can speak to the cost of doing the items found under "Advance the development of the Mackenzie Valley Highway, the Slave Geological Province Corridor, and the Taltson Hydro Expansion Project." Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know that we are in the assessment, the research portion of that. I will transfer it over to the Minister of Infrastructure to see if she has any more information other than what we have at the moment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you. Yes, so we are currently in the background sort of data collection, study, where we are hoping to, at the end of that, be able to produce the business cases, which would then include all of the costing, et cetera, for those projects. I do not have that information on hand at the moment.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: At this point, we are unsure of how much each of these data collection pieces is going to cost us at the end of the day?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: [Microphone turned off] ...have the numbers on what's happening for this next period of time with the funding that we already received from the federal government and the money that we had committed, and we discussed that as part of the mains in the budget

discussion. We have our funding at the moment for the work we are carrying forward. I can provide you with those actual numbers if you like. I do think we have provided them in the past. I just do not have them right in front of me right now.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. My concern and the reason I am asking this is because all three of these projects are very expensive and projects we don't necessarily have the funding for in the length of this government. The reason I am asking is because I would like to know what our investment is going to be in the study of three highly expensive infrastructure projects that we aren't even sure we can afford to do at this point in time. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, and I do take note, and it's actually a really good observation and a valid observation. When we all sat down as 19 Members before we elected Cabinet and the Executive, we made these priorities without all of the information that we should have gotten at the time. I think all Members would agree to that.

We also made a commitment as 19 Members that we would review the mandate, not the Ministers, the mandate, when that process comes about because we don't have enough money. We don't have enough money to deal with all these three infrastructure projects. We don't have enough money to meet all of these 19 priorities and all of these mandates. There is going to have to be discussion coming forward about whether we actually bring down our priorities, what do we focus our efforts on. I am hoping that all MLAs will take part in that exercise as we move forward. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess, looking at those major projects, if you look at this government, of course we do not have the money to take these on on our own, but we have got to look beyond that, though. Taltson hydro, for instance, that is close to Hay River, so I have interest in that. There is an opportunity to partner with Aboriginal or Indigenous groups and try to do something. I would hope that this government would reach out and take the first step to start

talking about that, because there are jobs, there is some ownership, there is Indigenous ownership, and hopefully it's federal money because we need federal dollars to do these projects. Otherwise, all we are going to do is go through four years, three-and-a-half years, of nickel-and-diming small, little projects.

I think it's important that we stop saying that we can't do this and we can't do that. We can do them. We have just got to find ways to do it. We have got to realize that the federal government has a responsibility, as well, and they have a lot deeper projects. Some of these projects may not make a big dent in their pockets like it would ours, so I think that we have to be more positive. We have to actually look at these things realistically. I just don't want us to say, "No, we can't do it." I see the potential for that. I see the potential for the highway down the Mackenzie. It opens it up to the people to hopefully lower the cost of living. It opens up to petroleum exploration if that ever comes back, to mining. It just does so much. Of course, we are not going to do it ourselves. We need the federal government, but let's make that pitch to them and get after them. They need something, as well. They need something to showcase, just like we need something, so there is an opportunity to do that.

At the end of the day, it's about jobs. It's about kind of opening up the North. For the next three-and-a-half years, that is what I am going to harp on, is the economy, business, and making it easier for northern contractors, northern businesses, northern residents to have jobs and stay here. Just like Mr. Lafferty had made comments earlier today about southern firms coming in, well, in Hay River, we have got a bridge going up. If a southern firm comes back, they bring all their equipment. They weren't paying the contractor. The contractor had to send them a letter and say, "If you are not going to pay this invoice, do you want us to send it to the GNWT?" And then an hour later, yes, the invoices are getting processed.

Those are the type of things we have got to do, and that is what we are up against, but we need to support those businesses. We have got to look at just not saying we can't do it, because we can do it. We just need somebody with deeper pockets to help us. We can look after the smaller ones. We can look after creating the jobs in the communities. That is easy enough. We have housing that we have some major projects. There are lots of jobs there. We have the fish plant. We have all kinds of things that we could be doing that will create a lot of jobs, so I think we have just got to be a little more positive. If Diane were here, she would probably say yes, so thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: No, it wasn't a question, just comments.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All right, so I will move to the Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. My concern with this area is that the prior government committed millions of dollars in shared funding to these three projects, which I really don't believe can be developed and completed simultaneously. We have a lot of money tied up in these three projects, in the start-up for them, in things like environmental assessment and design, where we know that all three projects can't go simultaneously. We also know that the millions tied up in the start-up of the three projects could, in some cases, be used for more urgent priorities, such as housing, for example. My question is: what efforts can we make to agree on staging these projects and redistributing the funding, or is all of this locked in in a way that we absolutely have no say over? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I agree that we have infrastructure needs throughout, like housing, like education, like schools, health centres, et cetera, right across the board. We constantly go down to the federal government and explain. I hate to use the term, but I call ourselves the poor cousin. We have a huge gap before we could actually be at the same place as southern Canada. I am not only looking at the federal government for that. I have been talking to our other jurisdictions, Premiers across Canada, to address that, as well. When we met with the Premiers, our first meeting, they gave us, out of four priorities, one priority just for the three territories. That will be addressed in the Arctic and northern framework within that, which have all of the issues, social issues, housing issues, et cetera. It goes across the gamut. We are going to keep doing that.

I also want to recognize that, although we may not be able to do all three projects as one, I would be a little bit hesitant at this time to prioritize any of the three because we have a minority government. At this point, if the minority government stays in, they will be picking depending on theirs. Right now, climate change is huge with the Liberal government, so Taltson is probably a favourable one. If the minority government gets tossed out in this next couple years, the next government might

not be as big on climate change, and they might want the Slave Geological Road.

We got federal money to do the environmental assessments. I think we should be lining up all three and ready to put on the table. When we come to the time when we look at our priorities again, that might be sooner than later, we do have to look at what is reasonable for the Government of the Northwest Territories to be able to move forward. All three projects are viable. All three projects will bring employment to the Northwest Territories and business opportunities. I think for us to put it forward would not be the best way. It is better for us to have all three business plans and say, "You pick," whatever government is in power of the day. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. With all due respect to the Premier, I don't agree that we should continue to invest millions in advancing these projects without seeing any business cases for any of them. Even at 25 percent, these are substantial amounts of money that are coming out of the GNWT, and they are speculative spending. There is no guaranteed return on this investment at this point or in the life of this government or even in this decade.

The thing about doing all this preparatory work is that, in some cases, it will need to be redone. For example, early in my time in the NWT, I covered the Mackenzie Gas Project hearings. Even though the Mackenzie Gas Project had been proposed in the 1970s, everything that was produced in the 2000s, they started from scratch. The idea of putting out the money for projects that won't be advanced in a reasonable amount of time when we have other competing priorities is something that I am really struggling with.

My specific question to you is: when will we see business cases for all of these projects so that we can have a reasonable discussion about priorities? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. If you can get the Minister of ITI to answer that question?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister for ITI.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: I think that one thing that we do need to keep in mind, while maybe the 25 percent that we are putting forward is very dear, or definitely we have things we could be spending our money on, we do need to remember that that has leveraged us a 75 percent amount of funding

from the federal government that can only be used towards these types of projects. While we are spending money that potentially we could use elsewhere, we are actually bringing in larger amounts of dollar into our territory which is a contribution to our economy that we wouldn't have otherwise.

Oftentimes in hard economic times, it is a known government thing to build infrastructure. It is a way to continue moving people forward and keeping them employed. While I recognize that that is a concern, that our funds are very limited, I would argue that the amount of money that the 25 percent is bringing in and leveraging is really, really good for our economy, and we need it to keep contractors and business as we move forward.

I can't tell you when the business plans will be completed. A lot of that is going to be part of and dependent on results. I would also say that the difference in technology and advancements in assessment-type work between 1970s and 2000s was quite a significant amount of technological increase in society. Therefore, yes, of course, that would have to then be redone. However, I don't think we would be doing the same amount of rework should these projects not advance.

I would also like to argue that I don't think that these are exclusive of each other, and all three could be advanced. It is just going to be a matter of staging our projects in a manner that we can move forward sustainably where we are not putting ourselves into a huge amount of debt to complete the projects. I agree with what the Premier says that it is going to somewhat come down to the whim of the federal government. We are at their whim. I also have no problems with going and pleading the case of, "You need to pay for more than 75 percent of this. We have a serious deficit in infrastructure."

I am going to do my damndest to ensure that we lobby as hard as we can with the federal government to pay for more of it, because this is not just a "this would be nice to have." This is a massive deficit to our basic infrastructure needs that none of the other provinces are dealing with. I feel like that is the case we really need to make strongly with the federal government, and I have no qualms with doing so. Sorry. It is probably not the answer that you wanted.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. No. The answer still doesn't address the speculative nature of spending 25 percent on a project that doesn't have a business case. If you went to a bank and you wanted to start a business and you said, "Could you give me 25 percent? I will get the business

case to you when I get it done," I can tell you from having written business cases that that wouldn't happen. There would be no money without a business case. This, to me, is a really key piece of information that we need as soon as possible. It is just not feasible to keep dishing millions out the door on projects that may not be feasible. I want to reiterate that.

My last question in this segment is about the 25 percent spending. What kind of guarantee do we have as Northerners that the 25 percent is going to be spent in the North? Environmental assessment firms are mostly not staffed by Northerners and not based in the North. How can we have an assurance that the 25 percent that is being spent will be spent by people who live and work here over the long term? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. First of all, I want to go back to the 25 percent. Twenty-five-cent dollar is absolutely right. I am not happy paying 25-cent dollars, either. We are just in the middle of finalizing a federal engagement strategy. Like the Minister stated, we will be going down there and asking for 100 percent dollars. Twenty-five-cent or 75-cent dollars are no longer good enough for where we are in our economy and our financial statement. We all will be pushing that.

The other thing is that you can't expect the Minister to be held accountable for projects that have already been contracted out from the last Assembly. What I can say for this Assembly is that we have made it a priority for contracts for northern contractors and jobs for northern residents. However, there will be occasions when there is specialty work that we can't get in the Northwest Territories. If that's the case, then, we will have to go out of the territory for specialty work, but we will be trying as hard as we can to actually employ our people, our residents of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier. I am going to move on to the Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I concur with everything that my colleague from Yellowknife Centre has said, because I was in the last Assembly, and I disagreed with this priority when we were talking about it. I made no bones whatsoever about that, and I continue to think that it's very misleading to the public to say that we are going to continue to work on these three. We cannot afford them all at the same time.

The Premier and Minister said that we don't have any cost figures for these. After the Minister of Finance said in a supplementary appropriation, when I was asking what the cost of Slave Geological Province road is, that she didn't know, I went on the ITI website. Lo and behold, March 2019, there's an economic study done of the Slave Geological Province road. The cost, as provided by ITI, \$1 billion. One billion dollars. When you look at some of the other interesting information in the study, most of the jobs are going to go to the South. Even during the engineering planning phase, 66 percent of the jobs, that's the assumption, are going to go south. Even if you get this through and there's mines that produced, 50 percent of the jobs are going to go south. That's what happens now with the diamond mines. Nothing is going to change. These jobs are not going to stay here in the North. We don't have the labour force to build this or operate it, and even do the mining, and fully benefit from this. I don't understand why we're leading people on and saying that we are going to get this work done. We don't have the fiscal capacity.

My question for the Premier is, I want to make sure that the kind of analysis that this government is going to do is going to include alternative economic development scenarios. For the cost of the Slave Geological Province road, we could get all of our housing out of core need. That's \$500 million. That's what the study from the last Assembly said. \$500 million to get all of our housing out of core need, plus we could get 20 years of universal childcare. It's a no-brainer for me which one I'm going to pick. I want to get our housing out of core need, and I want 20 years of universal childcare for a billion dollars. That's my priority.

Is our government going to do the macroeconomic analysis and compare different kinds of scenarios for the number of jobs that are going to be created, whether the jobs stay here, what the economic spinoffs are going to be? That's the kind of information I want. I don't want just business cases for these three projects, because I think they're quite unaffordable, and the benefits are not going to stay here. My question again to the Premier is: are we going to see economic analysis of other kinds of investments that we can and should be making as a government? Thanks.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The business cases that are being done for these three projects will give us a financial analysis of what we are looking at moving forward. Like I said, Madam Chair, this is one of 19 priorities. If I had my say on those 19 priorities, I was pretty adamant that I didn't want to see more than six. If the Members around the table would like to go back

to that exercise, I would be more than willing to relook at that. If the Members around this table wanted me to pick six that I think we should be doing, I'd be more than willing to do that. As it stands, 19 Members picked 19 priorities, and directed Cabinet to figure out how to address these 19 priorities, and we're doing the best we can with the limited resources that we have. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Whether there's 19 or 22 is irrelevant, and I've made it clear that I didn't support some of them right from the very beginning, and you know that from the discussions we had internally about these. I disagreed about this one in particular. I just don't think we can afford it.

The Premier didn't answer my question. I want to know whether there's going to be an economic analysis done on other ways of investing the equivalent amount of money it would cost to build these projects to invest in housing or universal childcare. What kind of benefits would accrue to the North if we made those kinds of investments rather than these big infrastructure projects where most of the jobs are not even going to stay here? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this point, I am not willing to take on any extra work doing a financial analysis of cost benefits for other economic areas. We do have some information. I do believe that there was a report done by the Housing Corporation that has an amount, I believe, to be able to get everyone out of core need. I think that's a document that we have already. I can ask that that be produced or be presented again to committee.

At this point, like I said, Madam Chair, we don't have a lot of money. We've admitted that. The Members all know that. Our fiscal capacity is, we're at the wall. We have departments that have been underfunded for many, many years. If we were to take this back, I would say, let's just fund what we're doing currently now, properly, in fact. We are taking huge leaps, and for us to commit to anymore, I am very hesitant, Madam Chair. We have 22 priorities that we need to get addressed. We have a whole booklet of mandate items, plus we have our normal day-to-day business that we're already done. At some point, we are going to break the capacity of the GNWT, so I am mindful of what we got on our table, and I would like to finish up

what we have first before we take any more servings on our table. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. This is not the first time I have raised this issue. I've continually raised this issue, whether it was during the development of the priorities, and in the previous Assembly as well, that if you want to have evidence-based decision-making -- that's what this Premier always says that she's about, and she's shaking her head "yes" -- you need to know whether you're getting value for money. Even with the Minister of Finance today, a big part of her speech was about value for money. I want to make sure that, if we're going to make investments in these big infrastructure projects, that they'll actually create more jobs for Northerners, more spin-offs, and investment in social sector. Things like universal childcare, housing.

The Premier doesn't want to have that kind of financial analysis done. That's very disappointing. Can the Minister agree that we should be making evidence-based decision-making, and look at whether these other opportunities for investment will actually create more jobs for Northerners? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I do believe in best practices, and I also believe in capacity and what we're able to do. Right now, at this point, I think that our capacity is at the height of what we can handle. We do have a report already on core housing need that we can produce. Universal childcare, I'm going to push back a little bit, Madam Chair, and say that that is something that is more relevant towards the capital and some of our larger regional centres. It, certainly, is not an issue that communities, for example, our smallest community is Colville Lake, Lutselk'e, might put on their priority list.

Again, it doesn't make sense for us to do a financial analysis on 22 different priorities to decide when some of them aren't even relevant to all of the communities and all of the residents of the Northwest Territories. If we're going to go backwards in there, I'm willing to go backwards. I'm willing to sit with committee. I'm willing to look at these priorities again and take some of them off. If we take some of them off, I would have no problem doing a financial analysis. Doing a financial analysis for every single one of them, Madam Chair, that could take four years. I don't think we have four years to do that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I appreciate what the Premier said. I'm not suggesting that universal childcare feasibility study be redone. I'm not suggesting that the housing core needs study be redone. What I'm suggesting is that you use the existing people in the Department of Finance that are supposed to be doing macroeconomic analyses to do comparisons and sensitivity analyses amongst different kinds of scenarios of investing money so that we are going to get value for money. That's all I'm suggesting. Thanks, Madam Chair. If we don't get it, you know that I'm going to come back and ask again and again and again for that. That's why I'm here. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, I have no doubt the Member will be back asking again and again and again. I respect him for doing that. We also have a childcare analysis, as well. I can provide that, as well. If I remember right, the cost figure annually would be \$25 to \$40 million per year for universal childcare, and that does not address every single community. The smaller communities, again, they might have one or two people working. They might not even need childcare. Universal childcare is very elite terminology when we have communities that don't even see it as their priority; something else might be. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I was glad to hear the Premier say that she is going to be looking for 100 percent of the funding for some of these potential larger projects, and the question I have for the Premier is: with a business case for each of those, how far along, or are we even started, and how long would it take this government to come up with those business cases? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. If I can get the Minister for ITI to answer that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister for ITI.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: I apologize. Could the Member repeat his question?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to the business cases for the three major projects, where are we with them and how long will it take to complete each of them? Thank you.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: As I said before, I can't tell you when the business cases will be completed. I do believe, in the mandate, there isn't a timeline established at this point, but that is going to be dependent on what we get. I did just want to point out some of the value. A 2018 historic value of production report is estimated, from the mines within or around the Slave Geological Province, at \$45 billion, so I would argue that that would be, I guess, the mineral resource potential of that region. I think that there is a clear case for why these should go forward, but I will commit to going back to the department and asking for a better, tighter timeline around the business plans and providing that back to the committee.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister for ITI. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The one item that is in here, though, is the business case for the Taltson project will be completed by spring 2020. The other ones aren't in here yet, but that one will be completed as per our schedule. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know those dates were in there. They were thrown in there or put in there. I'm just wondering how those dates were derived. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. We asked the departments to provide the mandate actions, and then the deliverable dates and the measurable outcomes. In fairness, the departments were a bit conservative in their dates because nobody wants to be set up to fail. Then we brought this mandate document in to standing committee as a draft, and standing committee said, "Be bold," so we went back to the departments and we told them to be bolder, because, again, I don't want to set up the departments to fail, either. They looked with a little bit more objective lens, and they put timelines that they felt would be reasonable, that they could be expected to have them delivered in. It's not the wish list that says, "I will solve world peace in a month,"

and it's not the reality that says, "I will solve world peace in 5,000 years." It's a balance that says, "This is what, realistically, we think we can do." That's where the timelines came from. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just one more question, and that is: right now, we need to make sure that the money we are spending is spent in the North. The contracts that we're giving out have to go to Northerners. Is the government willing to commit to looking at negotiated contracts in the interim to make this happen? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, there is a negotiated policy within the GNWT. However, we also need to make sure that we are abiding by the policy. For example, the negotiated contracts to help Indigenous governments to get their feet on the ground, I think it's five years that will support them in that. At some point, though, it has to be open to competition. It's not good to always have negotiated contracts, and then there is no market for any other business; you will shut down every other business. There is a fine balance to starting up, and we usually use them for Indigenous governments. Yes, we will use the negotiated contracts to help governments build their capacity, but we also need to take care of the private market, as well. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thanks for that answer. I guess the problem I have is that, the way the economy is right now, what's happening is we're getting an influx of southern business coming in and taking work away, so we've got to do something different in the interim. If we have companies in the North that are willing to partner up with Indigenous groups to do, whether it's highway work or whether it's building, or whatever, I think we should seriously look at that, because then that way we know that the work will be staying in the North.

I guess I'm looking for a commitment from the government to seriously look at that. Otherwise, we're going to end up losing it to the Southerners, and we're going to lose our contractors anyway. I'm hoping that the Premier and the Minister of ITI can commit to seriously looking at negotiated contracts if it's between the government and a joint venture between whether it's an Indigenous group and a contractor who may not be Indigenous, or could be, as well. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Absolutely, we do want to work with Indigenous governments whenever possible. It's a win-win. I say that every time I meet with the Indigenous governments. If we can get them more sustainable, they will actually give jobs to their people; that means savings on public housing, savings on income support. That's the way I'm looking at our relationship with Indigenous governments; not as a handout, not as a favour. We will work better when we work together.

Like I said, we are committed. I have no problem with doing negotiated contracts with Indigenous governments. As for partners, I mean, there is no way that the Taltson is going to be built without those partnerships. We have Indigenous governments that are knocking on my door. I don't have to knock on their doors; they've been knocking since I took over. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll take that as a yes, and thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All right. Are there any further questions on "Make strategic infrastructure investments that connect communities, expand the economy, or reduce the cost of living?" Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I'm not going back to the "big toys for big boys." I'm going to go on to the broadband part of the table. I see that one of the items here is to complete the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk fibre line. That's great, but what about linking the communities that the fibre link line already passes by to it, and providing distribution systems in communities that it already goes by? Why is that not part of the work that should be done here? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Some of the difficulty with this is that actually putting the broadband is not a GNWT project on its own. In fact, we do not have the capacity to do that. We need the federal government at the table, but we also need private enterprise at the table. Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk, it's on the books already. The other ones might not be, and so it's a matter of developing those partnerships and those relationships with our Internet provider, as well. It would be inappropriate to put actions in a mandate when we do not have firm commitments on things that are outside of our

control. This mandate should be based on what we know or what is in our control. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I guess I'll be pretty blunt here. This is another example of a P3 gone wild, where the promise was made, when the Mackenzie Valley fibre link was built as a P3, that this was going to speed up access for all of our communities along the link and that all of the communities down the Mackenzie Valley would have access to high-speed Internet. It has not happened. I guess the Premier is saying that this is a really a private sector responsibility. Then it was a poorly designed P3 that only developed a fibre link that goes by communities and does not connect them. I see the Premier shaking her head. She actually agrees with me. That is great.

What are we going to do to make sure that, when a fibre link line is completed to Tuktoyaktuk, they do not have a distribution system that they're not going to get -- what are the benefits to Tuktoyaktuk if there is no distribution system at the end of the fibre link? Is there a plan to have distribution system in Tuktoyaktuk, and then what about the other communities? I am not pitting communities against communities, but if we are going to make a promise that we are going to build broadband networks and improve speeds and all this kind of thing, you can't just build the line and not have a distribution system in the communities. What have we learned from the first time around with this so that we do not repeat the mistake again and leave Tuktoyaktuk stranded at the end of the fibre link? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have no problem admitting my weaknesses. I think I have done as much as I can talking about Internet services for somebody who does not even watch TV, and so, in that case, I will turn it over to someone who might know more, the Minister of Finance. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. The installation of the fibre line alongside areas, for example, the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway, where there is a highway that you can utilize at the same time, bringing the fibre into the community makes it easier and makes it more possible for independent service providers to come in and provide that link into homes. That said, what it's doing for the communities is allowing

opportunities to bring the fibre into schools, to bring the fibre into health centres, to bring the fibre into the GNWT offices, for example, the GSO offices.

While it's not a perfect solution to providing it into the homes, it certainly is providing better services in those communities. That said, the GNWT is actively working with Northwestel to support their application through CRTC for an opportunity to leverage some more funding from the federal government, to actually then turn around and have those fibres and to improve connectivity into houses. Is it a perfect solution, where I can promise, sort of, milk and bread in every home, the equivalent in a fibre line? I can't.

At the same time, there is active work happening right now so that the fibre lines are going into the communities that would not have had them at all, and then there would be absolutely no chance of any private service provider putting the line down all the way between Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk. I think, at this point, the intention is to continue to do that, to take opportunities where they are available on road systems or otherwise, and to get the fibre as close as we can or to work with those service providers, whether it's on fibre or whether it's on low-orbit satellites, to make sure we are achieving the goal of having all communities on a certain base level of Internet connectivity.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes, I have been asking for this plan for a number of years. I asked for it in the last Assembly. I will be asking again for it. Where is the plan to have distribution systems in all of our communities for the fibre link, whether it's the ones that are already passed by now or Tuktoyaktuk if we are going to build it to Tuktoyaktuk? That is a heads-up notice. I will keep asking about this. Look, I want this built to Tuktoyaktuk, but I don't want the community to be stranded at the end of the day.

I have questions about the next one, about modernizing NWT airport infrastructure. I am wondering whether Yellowknife is on this list. It does not appear to be in any way, so what about extending the runway in Yellowknife so that we could have direct charters from Europe or Asia, as Whitehorse enjoys? Where is that in the priorities or the action items here, because it does not seem to be listed anywhere? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Madam Chair, if you can ask the Minister of ITI?

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: I can get back to you with the details. However, my understanding is we can land significant-sized airplanes on the Yellowknife runway, so I would have to get back to you on that. However, the Yellowknife airport has a master plan. Sorry, I will have to get back to the Member. I am being reminded of my protocols.

There is a Yellowknife airport master plan. If you'll just bear with me to let me find the correct page here, I can give you some details on that. The Yellowknife airport is being looked at. Oh, where did I lose it here? It's being looked at for its own capacity and its own merits outside of the remainder of our airports, so there are going to be changes coming there to better expand for tourism opportunities. Again, I am just trying to -- I have literally lost sight of it here. I think my infrastructure binder is the biggest thing ever. Sorry, one second here.

The airport master plan work is ongoing, and it will be completed in early 2020. They are doing related background technical studies right now as well as market and economic analyses studies, which all have been completed and are being reviewed. The draft airport plan will be shared with Members for their input and comment once it is completed in the spring of 2020, so I imagine that, as the tourism people move forward with our tourism strategies, they are very much interested in discussing or being involved with the airport plan so that it can accommodate any future endeavours we would like to take in tourism.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. All right, so I just want to remind the Members to just direct your conversation through me, just so we can get the microphone, and, if you can, say "thank you" when you are at the end, just so that way I know you are done and I can redirect. Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just in regard to the fibre optic line, I am just going to rant here. It's not for you, Madam Premier, but it's just like a vacuum cleaner here. Everything comes here. Then, whatever falls off the table, small communities will get it. That is the way everything pretty much works here, by the sounds of it.

Fibre optic will bring so much for the school and health centre. Cell service, maybe Northwestel will give cell service for the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway. Maybe they will get an ambulance. There is no ambulance, so if somebody gets hurt on the highway, you are a hundred-and-some kilometres out; no one is going to come. Somebody will pick you up with a pickup.

There are so many issues that we do have in our small communities, but we make do with what we have got with government downloading, and that is what it comes to. Our community governments are so stretched right now that, when they are providing services, the dollars are stretched for busing, for youth, for lunches, everything. Communities are left behind here. I am sick of it, Madam Chair. You always say "33 communities," "33 communities." Start acting like there are 33 communities and not just one of the bigger centers. You have to take care of everybody.

Federal government gives us \$29,500 per person per year. Maybe, I think it is up to \$34,000 a year now. Provide service for them. You are not providing service for my people that I represent in the community. You are not. I have houses that, when the wind blows, the wind goes right through the damn house, Madam Chair. I have mould. I have people being sick. I have health issues, concerns for the people who I represent who were an afterthought. That is the way it feels. I have all the respect in the world for my colleague. Something like this small, probably \$400,000 or \$500,000, where it is a drop in the bucket that they are going to question. Then we could find \$4.5, \$5 million for the Stanton Territorial Hospital. I know it is a hospital, but they find money for the bigger projects in Yellowknife, not for the communities. Communities are suffering. People are hungry. Get jobs. We need jobs. Please and thank you. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Would the Premier like to respond?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the comments, and I agree. Especially as Cabinet, we have a responsibility to 33 communities, not one, not our own ridings. I have said that to all of my Ministers. Every one of them knows that we have 33 communities. I have always said that, if we support the smaller communities, the bigger communities benefit from it. I hope that the Member won't take that for all Members in this House. Even the Members from the bigger ridings would agree that they don't think about the smaller communities. I take the point that we all need to think about them. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Are there any further questions to "Make strategic infrastructure investments that connect communities, expand the economy, or reduce the cost of living"? Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to talk about the modernization of the NWT airport infrastructure. I am concerned, and if

MLA Martselos was here, she'd probably be speaking on this, as well. The airport in Smith was narrowed. My concern is that if we are going to do it to one, they may pick on Hay River or they may pick on somebody else. To me, what we are trying to do is make the North more acceptably accessible. I have lived here for so long; I see where we take stuff away. Once we do that, we never get it back. That scares me when we look at these type of things, and it wasn't us that did it. It was the past group, but we can change that. I think that when we are making decisions, we have to kind of look forward, as well.

Airports are important. The cost of flying out of any community, except for Yellowknife, is pretty expensive. What I would ask this government to do is to really consider when looking at airports or downsizing or trying to do any of that, look at the bigger picture and look forward, because it is important, even with Fort Smith. At the end of the day, we just narrowed that thing, it probably wouldn't be too much to widen it again. That should be a consideration. It is not just with the airports. It is with everything else. Looks like the Minister of ITI would like to comment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Technically, Infrastructure. I would like to clarify that nothing has been taken away from the runway in Fort Smith, and the functionality of the airport is exactly as it was prior to the narrowing. Cell phones used to be this big. Now they are this big. Getting smaller does not mean anything has been reduced in functionality. Should anybody feel that the Fort Smith airport is not performing as it needs to, including being able to land 737s, I would encourage them to have the airlines raise that safety concern through the safety protocols under Transport Canada. I don't mean to belabour that point. However, there has been nothing taken away from the Fort Smith airport in terms of functionality. It purely was a physical narrowing that then allowed us to access funding for resurfacing.

I completely agree with the Member. One of the reasons that I ran for this position was to be more proactive in the government and looking at things down the line, which we need to balance with, "Do we have the money to do that?" I get that there is always going to be the balance we have to play off, "How much money do we have for a project, and how much can we build in the capacity for expected growth?" I can say yes to the Member that I do commit to trying to be more forward-thinking with any projects that come under my departments and ensuring that we look to the future and not just "What do we need right now?" Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. The functionality of the airport, we will deal with Fort Smith, is still there, but I disagree with the Minister in saying nothing was taken away. There was something taken away. There was a section on both sides taken away. It was narrowed. I am glad that she is saying that there will be some more forward thinking and some thought put into any decisions made with respect to whether it is runways or anything else that we are looking at. Just a comment. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. As it was just a comment, I am going to ask if there are any further questions to "Make strategic infrastructure investments that connect communities, expand the economy, or reduce the cost of living." Seeing there are none, we will move on to page 19.

Due to the agreement that we made the last sitting for the mandate, I am going to limit to one round of questions per. Get your questions in order. You have 10 minutes for one round per priority. We are moving to page 19, "Increase economic diversification by supporting growth in non-extractive sectors and setting regional diversification targets." Questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to speak to the mandate commitment here, "Encourage entrepreneurship by reducing red tape and regulatory burdens on small businesses." I am very happy to see that we kind of snuck this in under this one. I believe every ITI Minister for the last few years has committed to this. There is actually a measurement for red tape. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business provides a Red Tape Report Card. The Northwest Territories has received an F on that report card every single year. Then the 2020 one came out, and we weren't even on it. They just seemed to remove us from the report card, we were doing so bad.

I believe what is happened is, the GNWT, we love passing regulations, and we keep expanding. We give no thought to implementation or whether we have the resources to enforce them. Consistently, I am having constituent issues of people who are just ignoring the law because the process is so burdensome, and there aren't people on the other side to help guide it through that. My question is here: when we are committed to reducing red tape, the first step to meaningfully eliminate red tape is to measure it. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, step one, asks that a government measure the total amount of regulations, measures what the processes look like.

Are we committed to public measurement of red tape? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am being careful what we are promising. I think what we need to do is: the policies or the legislation that is on the plate, for example, the Business Incentive Policy, the Northern Manufacturing Policy, absolutely, we should be doing that analysis. I have never heard of this, but I wrote it down, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. I am going to be looking at it myself. However, to do right across the whole board, I do not think that would be realistic at this point, but we can commit to doing it for the ones that we are looking at changing. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. I went on a bit of a rant there and started speaking very fast and passionately. I am very passionate about cutting red tape in this government. I would just like a commitment from the Premier to ask her department or whoever is responsible ultimately for this department -- I believe it's ITI and Finance -- to look at the qualifications set out by the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses and see if maybe we can improve our "F" that we get every year. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. What I will commit to is that I have given direction to the Minister of Finance and the Minister of ITI to check the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses to look at a measurement. That saves me doing it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess, when I look at this, the first point there of working with community governments to identify and advance economic opportunities, there is an area there and how we will do it. There is job creation, right there, and that is job creation probably without -- you don't need trades, and you probably don't really need an education. It's basically for anybody. I think that that's an area that this government has to really grasp and run with right off the bat here. We can't wait.

With respect to the agricultural side, I talked to people this last weekend in Hay River, and they

would like to do something, but they can't. They can't. They don't have access to land. They have good ideas. They are trying to do stuff. They are stymied by the bureaucracy, and we have to change that. We have to give direction to the bureaucrats in the regions that they have to be positive. They have to be willing to say yes more than they say no. If we don't do that, we are not going to get anywhere.

When I look at this, I look at agriculture, I look at the fisheries, I look at forestry, all the areas around that would positively impact the South Slave. I am wondering and I would ask the Premier: what is this government going to do to push this forward as quickly as possible? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Some of the Indigenous governments are already on this and they are already doing their work, so it's a matter of bringing them all together and making sure that every single region has an economic plan, because some Indigenous governments have more capacity than other Indigenous governments to be able to do this work. We need to make sure that we are there to support them. How soon it gets done, we have already been talking to the Indigenous governments. Like I said, I phoned all of the ones that are in the intergovernmental council already. I have met four or five with bilaterals, with Ministers. We are already putting this on the table and stating that it's going to happen, that we want to support them with it.

Another thing that we have talked about doing is, we have to be careful. What I did realize since I became elected is that Indigenous governments do not have enough capacity as it is, as well. When I look at it, I gave direction to all of my Ministers to engage stakeholders as much as possible, so now we are going to engage them on our education, on our healthcare, on our housing projects, on our lands project, on our justice services. At some point, do they have the capacity?

We have been talking not only about their regional economic plans, but capacity building, and we do have a week-long forum that we actually address these issues. We are trying to be as proactive as possible to address all of the issues but also support the Indigenous governments so that they can actually do the work that we all need to do together. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess it's not just Indigenous governments, but it's others, as well, that are already doing work on the ground, and whether it's support from this government for the bureaucracy, they are just not getting it. They get stymied, and a lot of times it comes down to personalities, and we can't operate like that. We have to operate fairly. This government has to be fair. If there are rules and procedures and there is legislation, let's follow it. If it's wrong, then let's change it, but we have to be fair with everybody. We cannot be, "Well, I don't like you," or whatever, or, "I don't like what you are doing. Here's my pet project." I have seen that happen over the years, and it's got to change at some point, and I am hoping this government is where it's going to change. If we have to change people out, I have got no problem with that, as well. We have done it already, and just keep on going.

I guess, at the end of the day, I don't want to have more meetings. What I would like to see for the Hay River region, for instance, the South Slave, I would like to see the ITI Minister come to Hay River and take her around and talk to each of the businesses there, agricultural, fishery. I know she committed to it, and I know she will do it. Hopefully, she can commit right now before she figures out what I said. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you. I believe that the Member wanted the Minister of ITI to go into Hay River and meet with businesses and things, so I am going to say that she will do that. The other thing is that I do agree that they need to be fair. I agree that government employees are public servants; our job is to serve the public. However, you are absolutely right, it is about personalities, so we offer all kinds of cultural awareness, about customer service, you know, all kinds of training. The reality is that some people are kinder than other people, and, wisely, they do not give me the direction to be able to fire every single person in the Government of the Northwest Territories or we'd all be starting again. However, I agree. We are public servants. Our job is to serve the public, and so I am asking every government employee who is listening to this: please, your job is to provide proper service to people; do not forget that as you enter your workday. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to touch on tourism, as well. This last weekend, I had the opportunity to go down and take a look at a facility in Hay River, and there are a couple of them there. It's interesting because I go

down there, and I know housing had gotten rid of these houses, quite a few of them there in an area called "Disneyland," because the houses were unfit for habitation. Well, they are all down there by the lake now as little chalets and cleaned up and beautiful and get rented out for whatever. There is really an opportunity for tourism in Hay River, but, again, they are having trouble with bureaucracy. They need our help. They need some funding, which we have, and what I am finding is that we have now the communities encroaching on ITI funding, and that should not be.

If the communities want funding, go to MACA. ITI should be for businesses and that's it in the NWT. I think we have got to be really careful that we do not start funding community governments when we should be funding businesses and providing them that support, because they are the ones out there. We do not want the communities competing against business, and that is happening. What I would ask, I guess, is for a commitment that the Department of ITI take a look at funding and make sure that there is something there that does not go to community governments; it goes to businesses only. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Since the question was directed to the Minister of ITI, then I will ask the Minister of ITI to answer the question. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister of ITI.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is the first I've heard of that, so I will definitely commit to looking into that. I just also wanted to let you know that the department has just asked me to come to Hay River on the 23rd of March, so it looks like somebody was listening to the Member somewhere, and it sounds like a trip to Hay River is being planned sooner rather than later.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. A comment, I guess, to the Minister of ITI is that I think it's important that, when she does come to Hay River, she meets, you know, one-on-one with the businesses. We don't need bureaucracy there, except for me. That's what I would ask, so that there is a frank discussion and you hear what they are saying. Because you have to hear both sides, at the end of the day, and that's all I ask. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Minister has committed, absolutely, that she would listen to the businesspeople, and she is fine without the MLA there. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier. I do have two more Members, but I am going to call a short recess right now, as supper is here; then we will resume.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I will call the committee back to order. We were on page 19, "Increase economic diversification by supporting growth in non-extractive sectors and setting regional diversification targets." To the Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. My question has to do with the first point. Madam Chair, I've become very cynical about plans and government; they tend to be very drawn-out affairs that delay action, and I fear that that's the case with these regional economic development plans. What I hear from my small community colleagues on this side of the House is that the situation with jobs and economic development in the communities is urgent, and so the idea of leaving these plans to be completed by the summer of 2023 doesn't respond to that urgency, in my mind. The plans need to be started as soon as possible. It says spring 2020 here. That's a good time to begin, but is there any way they could be completed within a year? Really, to have any effect, they need to be done as quickly as possible. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I would like to be able to say that we'll get them done in a year; however, I can't. This is work that we're doing with the Indigenous and the community governments, so it is on their timeline, and so, to be respectful for those governments, we have to work when they are. I would like to say that some of the Indigenous governments already have economic plans; they're on board. Just because it says spring 2020 and ending in 2023, it doesn't mean that we're not on it already. We're already talking about it and, as soon as we can get them completed, that is my priority, as well, to get them done so that we can get moving.

The whole goal of this is because I've heard for the last four years, Madam Chair, that people have said, "You only talk about your capital city and your regional centres, and you need to talk about the small communities." By doing these regional

economic plans, it actually will address every single community region in the Northwest Territories, and that's what I'm hoping to accomplish. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Madam Chair, and my thanks to the Premier for that response. Perhaps the Minister could provide the accountability and oversight committee a more detailed answer of some plans that are already under way and some that have still to be started. I feel that Indigenous organizations would want these plans to be done as quickly as possible, as well, so I want to make sure that, on the territorial side, we're fully resourced to get these plans done as soon as possible. My concern about 2023 is that we'll have no budgets left by then, so whatever these plans say, we won't have any time left to implement them, and there will be no onus on the 20th Assembly to take them up. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I will commit to actually offering the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight a thorough briefing on this. I will send a letter to them. Again, the reality is that we have to work. Some Indigenous governments, for example, are already barrelling ahead with their economic development and what they're doing. Other ones are at an area where they haven't even thought about it. Again, some will be easier, and some will need a lot more support. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the Premier for that answer. I recognize that this is a classic case of one size doesn't fit all. Some Indigenous government organizations are already very engaged in this. They have economic development arms. They have their own strategic plans. If those can be grafted onto the government's or the multi-stakeholder regional development plans, then, obviously, that makes a lot of sense. I look forward to hearing more detail on this issue, and those are all my questions. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I'll take it as a comment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Moving to Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just looking at the question, I'll make some comments about economic diversification. This section here says what we will do. It says we will work with Indigenous and community governments to identify and advance economic opportunities.

One of the things that I ask myself is, our local and our Indigenous businesses, they don't have the capacity to move ahead. There are a lot of barriers, like right now in terms of business. What I mean by that is there are barriers in terms of BIP and the P3 strategy. I did some research on this. There are jurisdictions, i.e., the U.S., they have their own programs to help out minority people with their business. I guess I have a question for Minister of ITI. What is her department going to do to help build the business capacity with Indigenous and local businesses?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will pass it to the Minister of ITI. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister of ITI.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Yes. We would be looking to continue on with our SEED and business planning funding and continue to build out those supports to small businesses. I guess I would say that this is already work that ITI does, so as we go forward and we have discussions with intergovernmental meetings, like bilaterals and such, this is a conversation I am having on sort of a case-by-case or region-by-region basis with each government. What I'm doing is, I've been listening to them, and trying to get their inputs and feedbacks on what they're not feeling is working with the department.

What I'm really starting to understand, in general, is there is a real lack of communication at times going on and a lack of response. I had somebody comment to me, "I notice that you said thank you for the e-mail, and you'd get back to somebody," and I was like, "Well, why wouldn't you do that?" I'm hearing my departments are not doing that so much. One thing I can do is I can promise to increase better communications, but I am trying to solicit that end user feedback from Indigenous businesses and start-ups that maybe have had issues with the department. If that's the case and you know of people like that, I would be more than willing to talk with them. We are just going to continue along with our SEED development.

We've talked more about how we can provide business training for businesses, but I've heard the feedback of stop bringing Southerners up to tell

northern businesses how to do business in the North. That's another one where we're not going to be looking to bring up Joe Blow from Toronto who is going to give advice to someone selling cookies in Inuvik on their business. This isn't realistic and to me, it's a waste of money. All I can do is commit that we're going to be looking at those programs and using them better and more efficiently. If there's issues, please let me know.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for the response from the Minister. My concern is, and somebody has already echoed today, that my money is leaving the North. I just feel right now, I'm hoping within the life of this Assembly that we will see changes for our local and our northern and our Indigenous businesses, and have something real to show for it because right now, it's not working out that way, and I'm hoping we go in that direction. That's just a comment, not a question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. I will move on to Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I'm looking at the second item on this page. Increase tourism in the NWT with a focus basically outside of Yellowknife. That's fine, but there are actually tourism needs in Yellowknife, and I would like to hear from the Premier how this government is going to support tourism in Yellowknife and around Yellowknife? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. If I remember right, I think it was over 120,000 tourists came through Yellowknife in the last year. Correct, 120,000. I think it was around that. It was 110, I think, the year before that, so we're steadily increasing. Yellowknife doesn't need to have an influx in tourists. What we need in Yellowknife, and my personal opinion, is we need activities for tourists to take part in. That's the issue in Yellowknife. The smaller communities, like we've heard over and over, have no economy. Tourism is a viable economy to the smaller communities. Even though we've said that we're focusing on small communities, it doesn't mean we're neglecting Yellowknife. Yellowknife is happening. It's already there. It's pre-sustained. It's a matter of trying to get some of those tourism dollars into a small community so that they can make tourism a viable, economic diversification as well. It's not that we forget Yellowknife. We have to work with the private market in Yellowknife as well. Some of our things, there's all kinds of opportunities, but people need to

take advantage of it. What we do need to focus on is getting the tourists into the smaller communities, and that's what I'd like to focus on in these four years, without forgetting Yellowknife as well. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I am glad to hear that Yellowknife is not going to be completely ignored, because it is the gateway, even to get people into the smaller communities. As part of the packaging, the Premier talked about, take people for a trip out to Thaidene Nene. If it can be a winter location there, it would be a great little trip outside of Yellowknife.

We do have needs here. We don't have a proper visitors' centre. I had to drag the last ITI Minister through the basement of City Hall to see what's left here. That's not a proper visitor service centre for a capital city that can serve as a gateway to other places. That needs to be addressed. There's the issue around tourism regulation that's been in the news recently here about people not getting very good work experiences, and not getting paid and so on. That needs to be addressed in a more systematic fashion and to help promote places outside of Yellowknife. Presumably, these things are going to be addressed as well? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Once we have done this mandate, and we've tabled the mandate, the next process is to actually come up with a budget to address some of these mandate things. Again, recognizing there's 22 priorities, we're not going to have a lot of money. We're not going to get everything done properly. We can either spread it out really thin or focus. I'm not sure where we're going to go with that yet. It's a debate that Cabinet will be having. Yellowknife's not going to get forgotten.

The Minister of ITI just brought up that they do get \$161,000 every year towards the visitor's information centre. They can use that as they wish. I can't promise there will be new money for the new centre in Yellowknife at this point because, like I said, we don't have a lot of money, and we have a huge amount of priorities, and you pick one. Universal childcare, the municipal funding gap; one of those alone has just taken out a whole mandate budget. We're in a position where we're struggling to get it done. What I can say, though, Madam Chair, is that businesses in Yellowknife need to also take a piece in this. When I was campaigning, I went to business -- I can't even remember. The

Chamber of Commerce did a panel, and they were saying, "Where is our economy," et cetera, and I said, I think it was 100,000 people at that time, "A hundred thousand people come through Yellowknife. If every business built a little trinket, and they could sell one little trinket for \$1 to every tourist, that's \$100,000 in your business." The reality is that tourists don't come with just \$1 in their pocket. Tourists come with thousands of dollars in their pocket, and they are walking around our streets of Yellowknife looking for things to do.

To anyone who is hearing, this is something we have to keep saying to the public and to the private enterprises, is that there is money there. Start taking advantage of it, looking for things to do, because there is a need, there is a niche, and we have a huge opportunity we're not taking enough advantage of. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I don't want to prolong this, but I guess I had hoped to see something about developing partnerships even within Yellowknife as part of the mandate. The city has the opportunity to develop a hotel levee; they haven't taken that up. I recognize that, but there could be work with Indigenous governments here in Yellowknife. There is federal money available for cultural centres, as well. I think you can be creative. If ITI can find ways to help with these kinds of partnerships, that would be great, but we do need proper visitor services in Yellowknife to make sure that people can get out to other places, as well, even if it's part of a strategy of increasing tourism outside Yellowknife.

The last thing, I guess, I'm going to say is that I went to Iceland in 2015. It's a country of 300,000 people. They get 3 million tourists a year. Everywhere you go, there's a package, and in many places, more than one that you can do. I agree with the Premier; that's what we need to develop here, is options and packages for people to do when they get here, so that there are things for them to do and they're not necessarily tied to one operator when they get here, either.

I think there are lots of opportunities to help the tourism in Yellowknife, and I'd like to make sure that the department is going to be pursuing some of those, in partnership with Indigenous governments locally and the city of Yellowknife. Thanks, Madam Chair. That's all I have.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, my direction would be for the

Minister of ITI, and all Ministers, to work with all applicable stakeholders. That would include in our capital city; it would include the City of Yellowknife and our Indigenous governments that are located within our capital, or a proximity within our capital. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier. I'm going to move to the Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just in regard to increased tourism across the Northwest Territories, we have a really good one in Sachs Harbour, tourism. We have a good one in Paulatuk. In my home community of Tuktoyaktuk, I guess we've been left hanging because, right across this whole territory, there are parks and RV parks that are paid by the territorial government, and we asked for that same service in Tuktoyaktuk and they wouldn't do it. Now what happens is we are finally getting a trailer, but in the last three years, we've been using a shack with a woodstove and hiring our own staff through the hamlet's O and M fund to manage, like, to run our visitors' facility, what we have in Tuktoyaktuk. We hire about four youth, and we do agreements with the territorial government, but nothing's ever done. There is nothing permanent there. There are no hotels; there's nothing. As a community, people drive in, drive out; drive in, drive out. Last year, we were the top five in Canada to come on a North American visitors list.

The thing is, again, I'd like to see some of that \$160,000 that Yellowknife gets for what they're getting; we get, I think, \$15,000 or \$20,000, \$25,000, and that doesn't cover all the costs, the costs that are being downloaded to the community. Where does it show, right now, with the O and M? Why can't we have an RV park in Tuktoyaktuk? We have one in between Fort Liard and here, in the middle of nowhere. They're paying for that. Why can't we have one in Tuktoyaktuk, where it's sea to sea to sea? There's no support for us; no support. I get tired of that cliché, government downloading, but they don't help, and Tuktoyaktuk always has to fend for itself. For us, put in a position to make a difference for the people who we represent, it has to work together. The government has to step up to the plate, even minor, to open up that RV park, so that people can stay in Tuktoyaktuk.

For myself, enough is enough. The hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk shouldn't take this out of their O and M. None of our small communities should take it out of their O and M to operate tourism. It should be a territorial policy, going forward, to work together. Everybody wants to work together now. I want to hold them accountable to this one now, because this summer, when the road opens up and we have 6,000 or 7,000 tourists coming to my home

community, and you're like a fishbowl, there's nothing for them to do, ITI has to step up to the plate with projects, like boat tours. One of my friends owns dog mushing and stuff like that. He's doing a really good job promoting our community, but, at the end of the day, the government has to step up to the plate. It doesn't have to be much. It's not \$2 or \$3 million, you know; it's maybe \$50,000 here, just to get the RV park set up, and a visitors' facility. The guy who is building it is out of Inuvik. When I was sitting on the council, even they told us, "We're going to give you one until you get your own, then we're going to take that one back." It's a trailer that's probably worth \$100,000.

The support has to be for all communities in my riding. I'm going to be going around on a tour, and I'm going to take my Industry, Tourism and Investment Minister and she's going to hear it in regard to we need help, and for the Premier to really hear it. I know you're hearing for 33 communities. It's the ones I represent where we need help in that area. That's just a comment, Madam Chair, so thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Did the Premier want to comment? All right, so we will move on. Are there any further questions on "Increase economic diversification?" Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. In terms of increasing tourism in the NWT, with a focus on increasing tourism outside Yellowknife, one of the items under "How We Will Demonstrate Progress" refers to the number of tourism operator licences outside Yellowknife. Just as a comment, one of the concerns I've heard from my riding of Kam Lake is southern operators coming north and operating tourism businesses within our city, and then turning around and taking that money south again. How does this government intend to make sure that our tourism operators are northern operators and that we are supporting Northerners, but also making sure that, when tourists come to the North, that safety is paramount? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just trying to remember back; I'm getting old, so things blend. Back in the day, before we had tourists in Yellowknife, we never had tourism operators. People would just come up here. I mean, we didn't even have paved streets, back in the day. We slowly got more and more advanced, and then tourists started coming. We weren't ready for it, and then the tourism operators started, but it's free enterprise, Madam Chair, and so it's important that we get the word out to northern businesses that there are opportunities here.

That is a job that we can take on, bringing awareness, but we can't dictate who is going to be in the private industry here in the Northwest Territories. My gut is telling me, though, in the smaller communities, you're going to have fewer people from the South who would be wanting to come up and take that investment into a smaller community than they would in the capital, so our goal is to work with our Indigenous governments, our municipal governments, our communities, residents, to actually promote the services.

We're not going to go south and promote our tourism services for operators to come up here. If they come up because there is a business opportunity, there is a right to mobility, but we would not be promoting for anyone from the South to come in and take our tourism market. That is not what we'll be doing. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. My next question is in regard to advancing the knowledge economy. Under "How We Will Do It," it says that we will work with a broad range of partners. Would the Premier be willing to expand on the definition of "broad range of partners" for that one? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Yes. "Knowledge economy" depends on how you define that. That is a hard word in itself to define. Of course, we need to work with our Indigenous governments for traditional knowledge. I think that is important to start with. We also have to work with researchers that we have in the Northwest Territories, all of the partners that we have coming up to the Northwest Territories. The City of Yellowknife did a study, and I think it was either \$50 million or \$80 million they were pursuing. It was coming through the North every year, annually, for research grants. We are not even getting a fraction of that.

To promote our knowledge economy and working in partnerships, it means Indigenous partners, it means universities from around the continent, it might mean other Indigenous people from the Arctic circumpolar. It's a whole variety. When you talk climate change, it would be foolish of us not to look internationally and circumpolar to see what the effects are. It's really hard to say what they are. It depends on what aspect we are looking at, but we are open to as many avenues of providing us knowledge on the knowledge economy as possible. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. My last point is more, I guess, a comment, just in regard to the point that the Member for Yellowknife North brought up in regard to the red tape report card from the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses. I get concerned when we talk about establishing a working group as far as how we measure that and where that information that the working group generates, where it goes, what happens with it if there are no teeth behind it, and so I would really encourage Cabinet to find a way of holding themselves accountable to the information the working group does gather so that we make sure that we actually are reducing red tape and we actually are removing regulatory burdens on small businesses. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. When you are talking about entrepreneurship and red tape, regulatory burdens, that says to me all over, Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Mines. My experience, being with those chambers, is that neither of them is going to sit quietly and not have a strong voice at the table. I see other Members who are smiling, knowing that. If you look at it, I mean, we are beginning it in the fall 2020 and a bit already, and it will be completed by 2022. My experience has been, with those organizations, they are very task-focused; they will be watching us closely. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier. All right. Are there any further questions on "Increase economic diversification by supporting growth in non-extractive sectors and setting regional diversification targets"? Seeing none, committee, we will move to page 20, "Increase resource exploration and development." Questions. Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. No, just in regard to our go-forward with the federal government on the exploration in the Beaufort Sea, I know that we are waiting for the federal government to open up drilling. I know that, to some people, that is a bad word, but for us, we were born and raised up there, working in the offshore, and we are hoping that our territorial government could convince the federal government to open it up, working together. That is going to alleviate a lot of pressure for where I am from, because it will create jobs with the offshore drilling if we are so lucky to get that back.

The Inuvialuit Development Corporation and the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, in regard to the

safety aspect of our Beaufort Sea, they take care of us in that work because it's in our land claim settlement, in the ISR. That being said, with the Premier, what is her game plan in regard to dealing with the federal government and the Prime Minister to get the Beaufort Sea opened up? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. When the federal government put the moratorium on the offshore oil and gas, that was not in consultation with the territorial government, is my understanding, being on the Cabinet from the last Assembly. We did not know about it. They did put a provision in it, though, that said that after five years it would be open to doing a review, a full review. That five years is up, and so we are actually already at the table. Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and the Yukon government are our partners in this, so we are working, doing that review at this moment, and we will be presenting the findings, negotiating with the federal government to open it up. I am not 100 percent sure if the federal government is going to lift the moratorium at this time, but what I am 100 percent sure of is that we need to have our case and be ready to identify what happens in our lands as soon as that moratorium is lifted. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier. Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just in regard to that, thank you for that answer, Madam Premier, but what do you think is the timeline? You say it's negotiations. How long are we looking at negotiations? Is there a timeline on that? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. There is no timeline on it. I am hoping it's not years. I am worried it might be years. Sometimes, governments tend to put people off and dance around us, but it is something that's really important. It is something that we will be going to the federal government with our Indigenous partners, with the other governments, and continually advocating. The federal government needs to realize that this is a huge part of our economic development; it's jobs in communities. Often, I hear that people do not have jobs in communities. This is a way of getting jobs into those communities. We have an obligation, therefore, to advocate for our people. I take that

seriously, and I will constantly bring that forward at the federal table. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. We have talked around procurement issues, and this seems like as good a place as any to look at it. As the Premier may know, the federal government has a threshold for Indigenous procurement, that a certain portion of procurement has to be with Indigenous organizations. In implementing this section and others that have to do with economic development, did the Premier at all think about making that a policy here in the NWT, as well? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to make sure I am understanding that the federal government has a procurement policy that gives a certain amount to Indigenous governments? If that is correct, then, when we look at our Business Incentive Policy or our manufacturers' policy, which we have committed to doing, then we can look at that within our review. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Yes, thank you. It's my understanding that the federal government has this threshold for Indigenous procurement, and so I wonder if it could be broader than manufacturing and exploration and development and whether it could be government-wide, that procurement in all areas of government business could have a mandated Indigenous component? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. What I will commit to is, while we look at all of our procurement processes, we can look at it. At this point, I cannot commit that that will be because, again, I do not like to make decisions off of not-good information. Once we do the review, if it's possible, then we will look at that. If it's not possible, then we can offer an explanation on why it's not possible. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Premier, when haven't I given you the straight goods? I appreciate your commitment to looking at how Indigenous business procurement can be reviewed in the context of the more general

procurement review that we understand is going to happen. That is everything. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, we commit to looking at it. I am trying to think, but I don't think the Member has ever not given me the straight goods.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Are there any further questions on "Increase resource exploration and development"? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. While we are on the subject of straight goods, I had suggested that I think the impediments to resource exploration and development is lack of certainty around land. That means completing the land rights agreements and implementing them to create greater certainty. That is not featured in here. I know we are going to get to a different priority that deals with that issue. What it comes down to is changing the kind of messaging that is coming out of our government and countering some of the messaging that is coming from particularly the mining industry, which is scaring away investment, quite frankly. I have told them this. The kind of messaging that they have been giving is that the North is too complicated; there are too many regulations; it takes too long. It is not true. We do things differently here because it has been developed and designed that way in recognition of Indigenous rights. The ability of local people to have more influence as they rightfully should.

The Minister of Finance, her final sentence in her budget address talks about showing the world that the Northwest Territories is a premier destination to live with a positive economic future, strong educational opportunities, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. That is the kind of messaging that we need to be giving out. Sorry. I didn't mean to be put words in the Minister's mouth, but she said it earlier. It wasn't "blah, blah, blah," but that is the kind of messaging we need to be sending out to attract investment.

We have a very good integrated resource management system here. Unfortunately, it is not properly funded. The environmental audits are not followed up the way they can and should be to improve the system. People try to come in and cherry-pick things like what Mr. Harper did in trying to change the MVRMA that resulted in it going to court. If we want to attract investment, we have got to change the kind of messaging that comes out of here. Our government needs to show the kind of leadership on this, even if it means countering what the Chamber of Mines is saying. If you want to mine, come here. Go to the Ring of Fire. How many

mines do they have? Zero, because there is zero certainty there. There are unresolved Indigenous rights. It is a complicated 10-year system. The government doesn't issue permits. It is a mess, Ring of Fire. You want to get a mine? Come here. The only thing that is stopping new mines is financing and commodity prices. It has got nothing to do with our regulatory system or environmental management system anymore. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. It is a bit soft, but I agree that we do need to change our messaging. The last sentence on the "How We Will Do It" says that we will promote investment and increase awareness of the NWT's regulatory system, because I think that is a concern that people often say. We need to also change our messaging, not only about getting mines here, but how people see mineral exploration in the Northwest Territories, because I keep hearing people are saying green energy versus mining, but you can't have green energy, Madam Chair, without mining. We have cobalt here. We have lithium here. Those are needed for batteries. We have rare earths here. We have gold here. We have minerals that are necessary to bring in a green economy.

If we were to shut down every single home in the Northwest Territories, 44,000 people, it would make a fraction of a dent, if any, on our carbon footprint. If we look at using what we have, we can actually help the world in actually looking at alternative energy. You cannot have alternative energy without mining. Everyone that says they can need to look at it again because even the clothes we are wearing, even the pencils and stuff we are using, things need mining. You can't look at it one or the other. We need all. Yes, we will change our messaging, not only around the regulatory process, but also around the green energy and how we can be a benefit in bringing the world into a greener economy. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. In talking about messaging and getting the message out there that we are open for business, I believe that we have to send a positive message. If we keep saying that we have no money, we can't do anything, then I don't blame people for wanting to come here. With the mining industry, I know I made a statement a while back, and I got a few nasty notes from some of the guys. They have to realize that the resources in the Northwest Territories are owned by the people of the Northwest Territories, this government, and

Indigenous groups. When mines are developed and put on stream, in one of the emails, it said, "It is the mining companies that pay for this." I guess they pay for it, but they use our bank account to do it, which is the resources. They end up with a profit at the end of it, and we end up with a little bit. Everybody wins to some respect.

I am not sure if they thought I was against mining, but when it comes to development, I am pro-development. I know we need it. We need a mixture of things to keep this economy going and to give us what we want in terms of housing and social programs. I reached out to the NWT Mining Association, and I said I would like to meet with them one-on-one and just talk. I will be an advocate under the right circumstances. We might have disagreements on the way to proceed, but I think it is important that we send out that positive message.

The other thing we have to do is, we have to make sure we have buy-in from the Indigenous groups and the mining companies and the politicians or the associations that support them. If we just keep butting heads, we are not going to get anywhere. We do need development. I will support mining development. I will support petroleum oil and gas development. I worked in it many years. I love that industry. It is fast-paced. It is up-and-down. It is an adrenaline rush is what it is. It put my kids through school and on and on. I think we need that. Again, at the same time, I understand that we have to protect our water systems, and we have to protect those type of things. We are downstream, and that is where we need our First Nation and our Indigenous organizations people to support us, because in that respect, they have more power than the Government of the Northwest Territories.

I am hoping that you, as Premier, and the Ministers can get out there and get that message that we are willing to work with the resource sector in promoting the North. If we have to deal with the red tape issues and regulations, let's try and deal with that. We are not going to change it maybe in our term, but we can at least start working towards something.

What else here? Everybody wants roads somewhere. Usually, they seem to go nowhere, but let's make them go somewhere. If there are industries or companies that want to do work up here, let's try to steer them towards some communities that do need roads, and maybe we can combine them. Otherwise, you know, we are just going to end up paying for something that we do not really need when we could put that money into housing or into something that has more impact. Other than that, I don't know. There is no question there, but I am just hoping that you will

convey a positive message that, yes, we are not shutting anybody out. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Do you want to respond, Madam Premier?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I agree it's important to work with Indigenous governments, the mining companies, and also the associations that support the industries. That was shown when we attended roundup, not only this year, previous years, as well. More and more Indigenous governments are taking part in it. They are coming down. They have got mineral resource strategies that are opening before them. They want the economy. We also need to make sure that we take care of our environment and jobs for people. When I was down at roundup, I said that before and I will keep saying it through my term: I am a diamond driller's daughter. I believe in the industry. We want money here. However, I am not supporting mines that are not having contracts for northern businesses and jobs for northern residents, and I was very clear with that to all of the mining companies.

The other thing is roads. It's easy to say, "I think that road systems are really important, not only to mineral resources, but to communities," and I have heard that argument here. People are saying, "We don't need the road to small communities. We're fine without it." However, I also see that people from this capital were complaining when they did not have a crosswalk going across the road from the Legislative Assembly. I do not think it's okay for Members to say, "We want our services by our communities, but we do not want to make sure that we have for all communities." My job as Premier, and even before that, my job as Minister, and even if I was a Regular MLA, our job here is to make sure that 33 communities prosper. We have many communities without road systems, and so, if we can get roads to communities and get resources on top of it, it's a win-win. Why would we not do that? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to touch on where it says, "Increase local supply and production of natural gas." In the South Slave, there is potential to have some of the communities supplied by natural gas, and I think it's Fort Simpson, Hay River, maybe Fort Smith, as well, and some of the other ones, and then maybe move that into a line into Yellowknife. There is some preliminary work going on, and I brought this up before. We have the oil and gas people sitting in Inuvik right now, and I am not quite sure what they are doing, but they probably have time on their

hands, I suspect. If we could use their services to look at and assist whoever in the South Slave is trying to bring natural gas into the North to heat homes and try to reduce costs, those are the type of things we need.

I know it's up to me, as well, to reach out to the Minister or whoever and get the parties together. I am not expecting you guys to do all the work. We have to do the work, as well. We can't just sit here and criticize. We have to help out, as well. Like I have said before, we have to have your backs, and you have to have ours. If we are going to move ahead, we have got to talk. When it comes to natural gas, I see an opportunity there. We have it here, but there has not really been a lot of discussion on it, and I would like to see us bring some natural gas into the NWT to supply some of the communities. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I absolutely agree. We need to not only look at natural gas. We need to look at things like hydro, as well. We need to get the communities, smaller communities, off of diesel. Diesel is not good for the environment. It's not good for people. It's not good for the cost of living, so we have an obligation to do that. I do know that some of the Indigenous governments in our northern communities, in Inuvik, are looking at not only for natural gas and how we use it in the territories, but also for exporting internationally. I think that we need to stay on top of it, and we need to be open to whatever opportunities we can get in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am looking at the line that says: "Increase [...] the mining incentive programs by 50 percent over the next four years." I see "Winter 2020, increase by 10 percent," and then I am going to the main estimates tabled today and see that the Mining Incentive Program has not increased by 10 percent, \$100,000. Will we see a supplementary appropriation for \$100,000 to increase the Mining Incentive Program in this session? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The budget that you see, that was presented by the finance Minister today as the O and M budget. It's the main budget. These mandates will have their own budget, and that is

the process that we need to bring forward. We have money that is set aside just for the mandates. It's a matter that we do not have enough money for all of the mandates, so there will be tough decisions to be made. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe I heard the Minister of Finance state earlier that these will be brought in supplemental appropriations in the June sitting, so can I just confirm that we will not meet this mandate of winter 2020, increase 10 percent, and this should in fact be spring 2020?

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Minister of Finance?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Any initiatives at this point that would be coming through from ITI would either have to be internally funded or would have to come through a supplementary appropriation.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to hold Cabinet to account here and say we have already made one error, and this will be spring 2020 is my guess, if we are getting this to \$1.1 million, or perhaps ITI finds something. Anyways, sorry, I have lost my train of thought. No further questions, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All right. Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Are there any further questions on "Increase resource exploration and development"? Seeing none, committee, we will move to page 21, "Reduce the cost of power and increase the use of alternative and renewable energy." Questions? Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am just looking at the second point here, "Expand the reach of energy conservation and efficiency initiatives." It notes that the intention is to partner with key stakeholders to provide these initiatives to those most in need. What I have found in talking to people within my constituency is that quite often our thresholds either are so low that people are not able to take advantage of programming or, if people do meet the threshold, they don't have the financing to actually go out and do the work and then be reimbursed down the road by organizations like the

Arctic Energy Alliance. I am just wondering if we are going to make sure that the people that this program is intended for are actually supported to be able to take advantage of these initiatives. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Deputy Minister Goldney would like to respond.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Mr. Goldney.

MR. GOLDNEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think the intent really in that mandate item is in part recognition that we do not have the program structured in the most efficient way to benefit those most in need, and part of that is signaling that we need to work with our partners to have that better focused, to make sure that we get better results, including having programs that might be means tested, as an example, so it's not just folks like me who can take advantage, who have taken advantage, of some of these programs and can most afford to, but perhaps better utilize those programs to reach more people. That is the intention. The details still need to be worked out, so there is a lot of further discussion and engagement that is expected with our partners. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Mr. Goldney. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. In the first point in this table, "Reduced reliance on diesel," there are three items that use the term "advance," and both have timelines of fall 2020. I am wondering if the Premier could please provide some indication of how Members on this side of the House can hold her accountable to advancing something in 2020, and kind of what expectations she has for her Cabinet to meet these advance stipulations? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. If the Members would like, we can offer a briefing to the standing committee to identify where we are with each of these projects, and the timeline that we see for them, if that would work for the Members. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Madam Premier. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. No further questions.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. When I am looking at this priority, I know it was one of the ones that I kind of was pushing for: reducing the cost of power, increasing the use of alternative energy and renewable energy, and working with our partnerships. From what I'm looking at, you've got advancing projects, and we've got the one project in my community that says, "complete wind power and energy storage project." With this past government and this government, this project has been stagnant. I know it's out of government's hands is what we're saying, but my question to the Premier is: is the government in the business of actually working in partnership and moving forward with energy, alternative renewable energy?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just a bit confused with where this is going. The government is in the business of trying to get communities off of diesel, in partnership with the federal government, and in partnership with any governments or any individuals that want to take part in that, so we have been actively seeking partnerships all along. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Madam Premier. Go ahead, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Just looking at this, and we are talking about getting our communities off diesel, working with federal partners with funding, because we know that there's a lot of funding that is for green energy. There are different things, like the wind project, being completed, and then we talk about other initiatives. There is the Department of Infrastructure, there are different areas that have the energy, and then we're working with different groups and Aboriginal groups.

In my community, we've got a lot of the solar farms going up that are net metering. We've got biomass. In our community, we're losing some of that money because of the red tape, or there's no movement within the partnerships with government. I am worried that we may lose more federal dollars instead of moving forward on projects. When I am looking at this priority, are we going to go to really look down into this priority and say, if we have governments that are going out, Indigenous governments and other businesses that are going out and getting federal dollars approved, how are we working together with them to ensure that we are not losing these dollars? They would benefit after the government, especially looking at our

climate change targets and things like that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The goal is to get communities off of diesel. The goal is not to keep it within our government or to have all of the power. The previous government, and I was a Member of that Cabinet, had taken the philosophy that, whenever government money comes from the federal government, give it to us, and we shall disseminate it to the communities. I've been an advocate since I began. My first meetings with all federal Ministers, with our Prime Minister, is that this government will not do that. This government will work hand-in-hand with Indigenous governments. If Indigenous governments want to take on housing projects, if they want to take on alternative energy products, if they want to take on whatever aspects they want, I will stand beside them and support them.

In saying that, though, I've also told Indigenous governments that I will not set them up to fail. If they are looking at taking on something, for example, housing, I've told them that you might want to consider starting with market housing for home ownership. I would not recommend they take on public housing at this time, because for every public housing unit is approximately \$23,500 per year. I am trying to support Indigenous governments and community governments as much as I can, but being honest with that, so that they are not set up to fail. We will be stronger if we stand together than we are if we separate. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Madam Premier. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Is there anything further on page 21, "Reduce the cost of power"? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Just a couple of points. What I see here is basically a cut and paste from the energy strategy of things that the previous Assembly had already signed onto. A lot of these projects, at least in the first one, are going to happen in the first couple of years. I am not sure that this is really going to advance us. What we need is an overall plan to get our communities off diesel, and I don't see that here. Is that something that is going to be developed? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this point, no, we're not contemplating doing a plan to get every community

off of diesel. In the short term that, probably, is not feasible. Even if we bring in alternative energy, there is only a certain capacity that solar panels can provide, that wind turbines can provide. If there's no wind, you don't get energy. If there's no sun, you don't get the energy. I don't see that as being a short term; I see for the long term that we will still have diesel being utilized in communities. Even in our hydro communities, in Yellowknife, which is our biggest hydro community, we still have diesel as a backup. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Madam Premier. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I disagree with the Premier on this. I think we should have a plan. That is something that can be costed and taken to Ottawa for money, and that is something that Ottawa would be interested in seeing. I'm interested in seeing it as well.

I want to just speak briefly about one of these projects, the Whati transmission line. I raised this in the last Assembly. I've already had one e-mail exchange with the Minister of Infrastructure. I think this is not a sound project. For the money that that's going to cost, we could get mini hydro in three of the Tlicho communities. I just don't think that that's a good investment of money, and we're going to have that debate and discussion, I'm sure, in the next capital budget as well.

I just want to raise one more thing, Madam Chair, and that's this section here is really devoid of any mention or discussion of what role the Northwest Territories Power Corporation is going to play in reducing the cost of power and increasing use of alternative and renewable energy. We do have Arctic Energy Alliance mentioned there. We do have NTPC, but there's nothing about governance in here. We had a long discussion earlier today about governance. What I see the core problem with NTPC is that they are married to this idea of big grids, big infrastructure, and that they have to maintain a rate base to fund that. The rest of the world is moving in a different direction. Smaller grids, energy self-sufficiency, and that's the kind of approach that NTPC needs to start to adopt. Get on board, folks, and find a way so that we can have net metering. Improve net metering options, and build energy self-sufficiency. That's not what the energy strategy does. In fact, it reinforces the position of NTPC, and I don't think that is the kind of direction that we can and should be going.

I would like to hear from the Premier. What is her vision of the future for NTPC and delivering energy at a lower cost in alternative and renewable energy? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't see NCPC actually being able to lower the cost of power. We still need the infrastructure. If we had solar panels and wind turbines and everything, even in our capital city, we would still need the infrastructure there to support the units. That has been proven over and over. I am not sure how many times we can say that as a Cabinet. We have been saying that for quite a while. I do want to say that the road to the Whati transition line is being used.

Yes, we could look at just doing small hydro projects, but the priority is also about, on the very next page, increased resource exploration, as well. This is our major economy in the Northwest Territories. If we do the small hydro things, they may address a community. Will they be able to expand into supporting a large industry, whether it is mineral resources, whether it is a manufacturing company? Our capacity in Yellowknife, my understanding is it is at capacity. If we don't bring in more hydro, we will not be able to expand our big industries. This serves two things. We can either think small-scale and just do little, micro projects for little communities, or we can think bigger scale and support the communities and also support the industry that we all desperately need so we have employment for people. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Madam Premier. Are there any further questions on page 21? Mr. Simpson.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to touch on one line item here. That is the "Advance the Hay River to Fort Providence transmission line." In Hay River, we have Northland Utilities, same as Fort Providence, but we get our power from NTPC, from Taltson. The other issue we have is the franchise agreement, which has been going on for I am not sure how many years now, three or four, maybe five. I am not sure how much money is being spent on that. If we would have saved that money or given it as rebates, we would probably be better off. Sometimes competition is good.

I heard the Premier say that she is willing to have a briefing. I would like to have a briefing from the Power Corporation so we can ask them questions and get an idea of where they are going or their ideas of where they are headed, because they have got some pretty high-priced help as board of directors, so I am sure they have a good plan. I would like to hear that. If she can commit to that, I would be pleased to be in on that briefing. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, the Minister for the Power Corporation is willing to provide a briefing to standing committee. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Madam Premier. Are there any further questions on page 21, "Reduce the cost of power and increase the use of alternative and renewable energy"? Mr. Norn.

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move to report progress of Committee of the Whole.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Mr. Norn. There is a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? Motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

MR. SPEAKER: May I have the report of the Committee of the Whole, Member for Yellowknife Centre?

Report of Committee of the Whole

MS. GREEN: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 12-19(2) and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is in order. Do we have a seconder? Member for Nunakput. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Item 24, 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 Wednesday, February 26, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Replies to the Budget Address (Day 2 of 7)

7. Acknowledgements
8. Oral Questions
9. Written Questions
10. Returns to Written Questions
11. Replies to Commissioner's Address
12. Petitions
13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
14. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
15. Tabling of Documents
16. Notices of Motion
17. Motions
18. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
19. First Reading of Bills
20. Second Reading of Bills
21. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

- Tabled Document 12-19(2), 2019-2023 Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories

- Tabled Document 17-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2019-2020

- Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates 2020-2021

22. Report of Committee of the Whole
23. Third Reading of Bills
24. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Wednesday, February 26, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 8:00 p.m.