



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
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The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, November 4, 2020****Members Present**

Hon. Diane Archie, Mr. Bonnetrouge, Hon. Paulie Chinna, Ms. Cleveland, Hon. Caroline Cochrane, Hon. Julie Green, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Martselos, Ms. Nokleby, Mr. Norn, Mr. O'Reilly, Ms. Semmler, Hon. R.J. Simpson, Mr. Rocky Simpson, Hon. Shane Thompson, Hon. Caroline Wawzonek

The House met at 1:31 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms. Semmler): Item 2, Minister's statements. Minister of Finance.

Ministers' Statements

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 92-19(2):
INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATION IN THE
PUBLIC SERVICE**

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to maintaining a professional and representative public service. Increasing Indigenous representation within our public service has long been a goal of the Legislative Assembly. The first and most visible tool used by the GNWT to support this goal is the Affirmative Action Policy. This policy and its implementation are often criticized as being ineffective because the percentage of Indigenous Aboriginal employees in the GNWT has remained at around 30 percent for the last several decades. Madam Speaker, the Affirmative Action Policy alone cannot address the root causes that contribute to this lack of growth in Indigenous representation among public servants. We acknowledge that this is a complex issue that will not be solved by a one-size-fits-all approach. Challenges to improved Indigenous representation exist at every stage of a public servant's career path, including hiring, retention, promotion, and succession planning.

Over the years, the GNWT has implemented several programs with the intent of increasing Indigenous representation within the GNWT. The Indigenous career gateway program, the regional recruitment program, the internship program, and the Summer Student Employment Program each take a different approach to bringing Indigenous residents into the public service. Cultural awareness training supports an inclusive workplace culture, and the Indigenous management development and training program helps Indigenous employees access funds for

professional development. Each program has its own benefits. However, there is always room for improvement to ensure these programs are used to their full capacity and are as effective as possible.

In response to call for action number 57 from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Department of Finance, in collaboration with Education, Culture and Employment and Health and Social Services, is redeveloping the cultural awareness and sensitivity training for public service employees. The goals of this training include: the creation of awareness and understanding of the impact of colonization; to have all GNWT employees recognize our collective roles in reconciliation; and to provide all employees with the necessary foundation and tools to be culturally competent.

With the knowledge acquired by participating in this new training, managers and employees will be supported to reflect on ways they can address the root causes of systemic discrimination within their workplaces, personal circumstances, and communities. This training will be mandatory for all GNWT employees and will be released in the winter of 2021. We recognize the benefit this training can have within our communities and believe it will help our government set an example for the rest of Canada. As such, this training will be available to not only GNWT public servants but to the public, as well.

Madam Speaker, we recognize that these programs are just the first steps on a long road towards addressing the imbalance in Indigenous representation in the GNWT. There is still much work to do. In addition, the Department of Finance is currently developing an Indigenous recruitment and retention framework that will include departmental Indigenous employment implementation plans with distinct targets. This framework will begin with a look at best practices from other jurisdictions, the development of an Indigenous labour force analysis of the Northwest Territories and a thorough review of current programs, tools, and resources. We will incorporate feedback received through engagement with Indigenous governments and internal partners, and will ultimately assist each department in reviewing their recruitment and retention to ensure that barriers to employment for Indigenous peoples are

identified and addressed across the whole of the GNWT.

Madam Speaker, our people are our territory's greatest resource. Investing in the skills and qualifications of Northerners provides employment for our people and benefits all residents and our economy. Through this important work, we will begin to identify, address, and dismantle the systemic barriers that have prevented the actualization of a representative public service. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Ministers' statements. Minister of Lands.

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 93-19(2):
COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES
ON NORTHWEST TERRITORIES PUBLIC LAND**

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Land is the foundation of the Northwest Territories, both figuratively and literally. Our government is responsible for managing 1.15 million square kilometres of it. Setting and enforcing clear rules and regulations for how public land is used is a critical part of ensuring that the Northwest Territories' land and resources are well-managed. Clear, well-communicated rules help the Government of the Northwest Territories make sure that everybody understands what can and cannot be done on public land. They also give the government a fair and consistent basis for taking action against anybody who breaks them.

The Department of Lands uses a number of pieces of territorial and federal legislation to help clearly and fairly set and enforce rules on land use. These pieces are further underpinned by the Ministerial Policy on Compliance and Enforcement. The primary goal of compliance and enforcement under this policy is to deter, minimize, and remedy non-compliance. The Ministerial Policy on Compliance and Enforcement also establishes that enforcement action should be timely and proportionate to the severity of the non-compliance and consider the actual or potential impact on the land and natural resources. Actions to manage use of territorial public land and resources under this policy include informing and educating the public about the rules and requirements and providing support and advice on how to comply with the rules.

The policy provides a fair and consistent approach to monitoring compliance. It is focused on education and building awareness. In short, helping to prevent non-compliance wherever possible and resolving any non-compliance before it impacts the land or natural resources. Where non-compliance cannot be resolved, the policy sets out a consistent approach that seeks remedies to fix any harm caused by non-compliance or to imposes sanctions,

including laying charges under relevant legislation. Consistent with this approach, the department regards unauthorized occupancy as one of the more severe instances of non-compliance. Members of the public can report potential incidents of unauthorized occupancy by calling their local lands regional office. Contact information is available on the department's website.

The Government of the Northwest Territories recognizes that land and resources are of significant importance to Indigenous governments and organizations. Since 2018, the Department of Lands has supported interested regional Indigenous governments and organizations to identify and document cabins that support traditional uses of the land. As part of our ongoing enforcement efforts, the department will continue to post notices on untenured structures. This first notice is an opportunity for the occupant to come forward and identify or clarify any legal basis for their occupation. As the department moves this work forward, we are also working with Indigenous governments and organizations to ensure there is a clear process for when a cabin that is associated with an Aboriginal rights assertion is posted.

The Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to the responsible management and use of NWT land, resources, and environment. To this end, the department will be bringing the Public Land Act into force that applies to all public land in the Northwest Territories and brings clarity to all land users. Madam Speaker, we are all stewards of the land. We all know our responsibilities. We want to ensure the people of the Northwest Territories know that the Department of Lands is continuing to take action by supporting a clear, consistent, and enforced land management regime. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Ministers' statements. Minister of Infrastructure.

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 94-19(2):
INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS**

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Madam Speaker, the 19th Legislative Assembly is committed to making strategic infrastructure investments that connect our communities, expand our economy, and reduce the cost of living. From highways to airports to buildings, I would like to provide an update today on the significant progress our government has made to improve public infrastructure across the territory.

Our government has improved over 200 kilometres of highway this year. We have completed 105 kilometres of new chipseal surface on Highway No. 1, and reconstructed the Inuvik Airport Access Road. Residents can expect a smoother and safer driving experience. These improvements were

made possible by funding from the Government of Canada's New Building Canada Plan. I thank our federal colleagues for their continued collaboration and support. In addition to improving the existing highway system, over 85 kilometres of embankment have been constructed for the new all-season road to Whati, which is scheduled to open next fall. This project is now more than 70 percent complete; a great accomplishment, particularly during this COVID-19 pandemic.

Madam Speaker, airports are an essential part of our transportation system. Communities across the North depend on air travel for the movement of goods and people, air ambulances, search and rescue, forest fire response, and much more. Airports also play a role in supporting economic opportunities. This fiscal year, over \$16 million was invested to enhance operations and services at 13 of our airports, including drainage and runway improvements and the replacement of older equipment. Three major capital projects are in the works at the Inuvik Mike Zubko Airport. A new air terminal building is planned to open in 2023. At the same time, improvements will be made to the airfield drainage, which will increase the resiliency of the airport to the effects of climate change. The design of a 3,000-foot runway extension is moving ahead as planned on behalf of the Department of National Defence.

Madam Speaker, we will continue to invest in our public buildings. Several major projects are under way across the territory, including a multi-year project to replace the Ecole J.H. Sissons school in Yellowknife. Our department is working with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment on this project, which will result in a larger, more modern, and accessible facility for students. In Tuktoyaktuk, another school project is under way. Our government is in the process of renovating and expanding the Mangiluk School. The project will increase the school's capacity, improve site access, upgrade aging buildings systems, and will include a community library space and a new gymnasium. A tender to complete the tenant improvements at the Stanton Legacy Building is scheduled to close on November 6, 2020, with an estimated completion schedule of spring 2022.

Madam Speaker, infrastructure projects will continue to play an important role in the economic recovery of the Northwest Territories post-COVID-19. These projects provide business and employment opportunities for our residents, boosting the economy while delivering the critical infrastructure that this territory needs to provide key programs and services to our residents. Quyanainni, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Thebacha.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY

MS. MARTSELOS: Madam Speaker, I rise today, along with my colleagues, to speak about the Affirmative Action Policy in the Northwest Territories. My focus in this Member's statement is to talk about the many gaps that exist within the policy. The Government of the Northwest Territories created the Affirmative Action Policy to hire under-represented groups of people in the public service. To ensure that the government is representative of the population it serves, the designated groups are Indigenous Aboriginal Persons (P1); Indigenous Non-Aboriginal Persons (P2); Resident Disabled Persons (P3); and Resident Women (P4).

Madam Speaker, while the Affirmative Action Policy has existed in the NWT since March of 1989, it remains an imperfect policy. There are gaps in this policy which people have been falling through since it was created. The gaps I'm referring to, however, are generally harder to measure and can be susceptible to manipulation through statistics, which hides many of the problems.

The main problem with the Affirmative Action Policy is not the policy itself, but rather the people who are doing the hiring. Everyone in the North knows that there is a huge issue of nepotism; of people hiring their friends or their managers' friends or relatives; or people tailoring job descriptions to match a particular person's resume; or people who put the qualifications for certain jobs very high because they assume an Indigenous person could not meet those qualifications, and so on. The problem with affirmative action is that it is so easy for interviewers to find weaknesses in applicants, which is then used to rationalize to screen out certain applicants from job competitions. More often than not, Madam Speaker, it is the Indigenous candidates who get screened out the earliest and in a greater degree than non-Indigenous candidates. Madam Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MS. MARTSELOS: In closing, Madam Speaker, at the end of the day, I am happy that the Government of the Northwest Territories has the Affirmative Action Policy. However, as I just outlined, there are still some real gaps within this policy that must be filled. This policy was meant to provide Indigenous people an equal footing with non-Indigenous people in the public service. It has helped with that, but until Indigenous employment reaches 50 percent to match the overall Indigenous population of the NWT, we have not hit our mark. I will have

questions for the Minister of Human Resources later today. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members' statements. Member for Hay River South.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Prior to 1989, this government recognized an inequity with respect to the lack of Indigenous representation in the GNWT public sector. In an attempt to address that inequity, the Affirmative Action Policy was established. The policy was designed to offer priority hiring to candidates belonging to eligible designated groups that are underrepresented within the public service. These groups include not only Indigenous persons, but also recognize Indigenous non-Aboriginal persons, resident disabled persons, and resident women.

The intent of the Affirmative Action Policy goes further than just trying to meet quotas for an eligible target group. Included is the need for training, promotions, and counselling of potential candidates. Subsequently, in 2009, this government further established the Indigenous Employment Advisory Committee with the intent of actively increasing representation of Indigenous persons at all levels of public service.

To this day, even with the policy and committee in place, our government has failed to meet its intent and goals for Aboriginal people. Our inclusion of Indigenous Aboriginal employees in the public service has advanced slowly, and it appears to have stalled. I hear concerns from potential candidates who I know possess the experience and education for the position they applied on but who then say they are routinely turned away or screened out of the interview process. I then asked myself: what is the real stumbling block to recruitment of Indigenous people into the public service? I know it's not the lack of qualified Aboriginal peoples in the NWT.

This brings me to the matter of the interview process and format. I am of the belief that our failure starts at the first stage of recruitment and, as with the qualification requirement, interview format and interview process. Due to cultural differences, the current process and format does not acknowledge, give way to, and respect Aboriginal Indigenous knowledge and the way we learn, communicate, or present ourselves during the interview process.

No matter how many policies we have in place, no matter how many committees we have in place, we will not make a difference without the political will;

political direction to bureaucracy; a policy that is clear, concise, and unambiguous; and a process that adopts and recognizes Indigenous people and our culture. If we expect success in increasing Indigenous Aboriginal participation in the public sector, then we must review the existing Affirmative Action Policy and recruitment process and be willing to commit that political will. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members' statements. Member for Nunakput.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
INUVIK TO TUKTOYAKTUK HIGHWAY

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As you know, after more than 30 years of lobbying and planning the design, the Inuvik Tuktoyaktuk Highway opened up in 2017. Since the opening, the ITH has been a lifeline for the community of Tuktoyaktuk. It has reduced the basic needs such as food, clothing, and supplies. Importantly, we can get to Inuvik hospital quickly for medical services. It has also been to visit family, friends, and relatives and to use the facilities there.

I am proud to say the project was built on budget and on time by local contractors, Madam Speaker. It's the highest amount of Indigenous local employment participation in any major project undertaken by our Northwest Territories government. It was built due to care on our Arctic permafrost environment. However, at that time, with the tight budget, the GNWT had to reduce overall height of the road in several locations along the highway. During construction, engineers advised the government that this would require additional maintenance and upgrading in the future. It's time for upgrading, Madam Speaker.

Since it opened, the ITH only needed regular maintenance, such as grading, resurfacing, gravel, and snow plowing. After three years, there are some areas where the embankment is now sinking, and it needs to be lifted. A few sections of the road need levelling to adjacent to the permafrost, causing melting in many potholes and washboards during driving the surface. This situation is urgent, Madam Speaker. It will only become worse and increase the next few years, especially when the Inuvialuit project development of a gas project gets under way and starts utilizing that road 365 days a year with LNG trucks, tankers.

I don't see where the funds have been allocated in the capital plan to deal with this critical upgrading. Recently, the Hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk and the Tuktoyaktuk Community Corporation sent a joint letter to the Minister with these concerns. I am following up on their behalf, Madam Speaker. The work can be done with our local contractors and

workforce. It's critical to bring forth projects that are shovel ready. We could help our residents and businesses survive during this pandemic. We need urgent action to protect our valuable asset, ensuring maintenance is done this coming year. Madam Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

**MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS
WOMEN AND GIRLS AND INDIGENOUS
REPRESENTATION WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT
OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**

MS. CLEVELAND: Madam Speaker, on Monday, I spoke of the disproportionate effects of the pandemic on women. When I asked the Premier what an Indigenous feminist approach to social and economic recovery would look like, she responded that there would not be a one-size-fits-all approach and that each community would be empowered to determine what that looks like. This is good news, but it does not explain what steps the GNWT is taking to make changes regarding the bills it sponsors, the regulations it develops, the programs and services it delivers directly to the residents of the Northwest Territories, and how it hires people into the public service.

This government made a commitment in this House to work on an action plan to support the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls report. The calls for justice identify the need for an approach to undo colonialism and re-establish Indigenous nationhood. It calls on government to work differently by challenging colonial influence and making space for marginalized Indigenous perspectives. Specifically, 4.4 calls on all governments to provide supports and resources for educational, training, and employment opportunities for all Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people.

Madam Speaker, representation is important. This government decides on programs, services, laws, and regulations that are meant to support, empower, and protect its residents. For this work to be effective and reflective of northern realities, the demographic of this government's workforce needs to include small community, regional, and city voices, and it needs to include representative Indigenous and female voices.

Forty-four years ago, Commissioner Stuart Hodgson published a paper identifying the GNWT's need for an Affirmative Action Policy because the Indigenous representation within the GNWT was only 30 percent. Today, we have an Affirmative Action Policy, and today, only 30 percent of the

GNWT workforce is Indigenous. The Department of Finance has designed programs to increase Indigenous representation within the public service. For example, Indigenous Career Gateway, regional recruitment, and Indigenous management training programs are available to all GNWT departments, but what direction is given to departments to use these programs, and what role does every department play in increasing Indigenous representation and, in turn, supporting the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls calls for justice?

Increasing Indigenous representation is the shared responsibility of all departments, just as the safety of Indigenous women and girls is shared by every single one of us, regardless of race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, or gender identity. Today, I will have questions for the Premier at the appropriate time. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members' statements. Member for Frame Lake.

**MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
FRANCOPHONE SCHOOL ADMISSIONS**

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madame la Presidente.

[Translation] In August, the Minister of Education brought an end to years of confrontation and uncertainty for French language students and families by rescinding the Ministerial Directive on Admissions for French language schools. The Directive was too long the basis for a series of costly legal actions, and was replaced with new regulations governing admission to First French language schools.

The new regulations were warmly greeted by the Commission scolaire francophone des Territoires du Nord-Ouest, which manages École Allain St-Cyr in Yellowknife and École Boreale in Hay River. Finally CSFTNO has been delegated authority school admissions with appropriate reporting. The regulations broaden eligibility with a "reaquisition" stream—admission of students who can show their great-grandparents were Francophone, and for children of "Francophile" parents within agreed upon limits.

Three students have been enrolled this year under the new regulations and six students who are the subject of the ongoing court case have been tentatively admitted and will remain students pending the outcome of the appeals. It's not clear why GNWT continues with its appeals.

Overall though, the new Minister last year has brought renewed collaboration between the board and the department and I congratulate him and CSFTNO.

I will have questions later today for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment on some issues still facing CSFTNO and its schools. [Translation ends]

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members' statements. Member for Deh Cho.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FIRST NATIONS HIRING

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Speaker. I understand the current Government of the Northwest Territories Affirmative Action Policy began around 1976 and was related to a report from the Commissioner of the day, the late Stuart Hodgson. The report was the Hodgson Report, and it set out to achieve training positions for Native Northerners in order to meet the objective of increased Aboriginal employment in the public service. This led to the creation of the Office of Native Employment. That office developed a discussion paper in which it was noted the difficulty in employing Aboriginal people in numbers reflective to the ratio to the general population.

In 1984, the then Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, the late John Parker, commissioned a discussion paper, the Parker Report, which recommended the development of a Native employment policy. The report also noted concerns with the constitutionality of an affirmative action program directed specifically for Aboriginal people born and raised in the Northwest Territories. The report notes that the Canadian Human Rights Commission raised concerns that the Affirmative Action Policy could be challenged under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Madam Speaker, in 1985, the Native Employment Policy recommended increasing Aboriginal representation in the public service from 30 percent to 52 percent by 1990. It was noted by a review in 1989 was that the increase was only two percent from the years 1985 to 1989. Madam Speaker, the report of the day by another firm indicated most government jobs back in 1989 only required a grade 10 education and noted that the majority of Native people had less than grade nine education. The report also goes on to state 48 percent of today's GNWT jobs require a university degree, not only about six percent of the Aboriginal population had a university degree.

Madam Speaker, I would like to point out that in the many meetings with the senior management teams of the GNWT that I was involved with, I did not see any First Nations people amongst them. Mahsi, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members' statement. Member for Yellowknife North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate my colleague, the Member for Deh Cho, bringing up the history of this because I think the Affirmative Action Policy is a white elephant. A white elephant is a possession that its maintenance is out of proportion to its usefulness. The Affirmative Action Policy, after decades, has failed to deliver on its promises. Indigenous employment remains at 30 percent. Even P2s, which are unconstitutional according to various reports, have not increased. They remain at 12 percent in the GNWT. I think what's happened is: consecutive GNWT governments have looked at this report, seeing that risk of a Charter challenge and gone, better just not touch that. Better leave it there. The reality is: we are open to that Charter challenge any time. Anyone at any time who is not hired by the GNWT and thinks that the Affirmative Action Policy discriminated them can bring a Charter challenge. It's likely a losing case according to the reports.

I believe this Assembly needs to finally address this problem, and it's not a popular solution. I think everyone in this room recognizes there's a value to people born in the North working in a public service. Indigenous people, I think, want to hire Indigenous people born in the North, not just Indigenous people, period, which is likely what the Charter would uphold. There are some unpopular decisions to be made here, but we have to make them. We have to make sure we have an Affirmative Action Policy that actually works because it's not working right now.

I recognize that the labour force and the needs of the GNWT do not align, and in many ways, our Affirmative Action Policy is trying to address a symptom. We must do more to educate our citizens. I believe the work of the polytechnic can make sure we are producing more university degrees. I also recognize we are not the only game in town. Many Indigenous people would prefer to work for their Indigenous government. It's largely more exciting work.

When I hear that, I struggle, because when I look across the GNWT, I see powers and mandates that shouldn't belong in the GNWT, that should be devolved to Indigenous governments. I think there are multiple solutions here. One is building our education capacity. One is setting clear targets. I want to walk away from this Assembly, and if it's 30 percent and we get to 33 percent, at least we made a little progress. We need to set clear targets, and we need to work with our Indigenous governments to once and for all get an Affirmative Action Policy

that works and is legal. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members' statements. Member for Great Slave.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
RECOGNITION OF JACK PENNEY

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am going to deviate a little bit from the theme today. Instead, I would like to recognize a constituent of the District of Great Slave, 10-year-old Jack Penney.

This year, Jack submitted his film "Eat Your Carrots" to the NWT-based Dead North Film Festival. "Eat Your Carrots" is a fantasy horror short that was written and directed by Jack when he was only nine years old. Jack is currently in grade five at Ecole J.H. Sissons School and, in his spare time, is an avid reader and snowboarder. He's also the best big brother to his sister, Lucy Dandelion.

Jack faced many challenges during the filming of "Eat Your Carrots," which included his cat, Pixie, stealing his Lego pieces as well as the difficulty of filming in the North in March. Jack's film was such a hit at the festival that it won the Zombear Award for the best death scene. This involved blowing up a snowman, and our own Legislative Assembly Clerk, Michael Ball, contributed his explosives expertise for this scene.

Recently, "Eat Your Carrots" was picked up as an official selection of the national, Toronto-based "Blood in the Snow Film Festival," which is currently being hosted and aired on Super Channel until November 8th. Jack is also planning on submitting his film to the Dawson City Film Festival.

Jack's cinematic success at such a young age is a good example of how the NWT strives to foster its creative community. This winter there will be many virtual events taking place which will allow everyone to attend, not just those lucky enough to get a ticket as often has been the case in the past. For example, the Yellowknife International Film Festival runs from today, November 4th to November 8th and anyone can attend from the comfort of their homes with no need to get out of their sweats. While the Dead North Film Festival will not take place this year, there is still funding available through the GNWT for artists. In fact, in the 2020-2021 fiscal year, there is \$250,000 up for grabs for the creative industries. This funding is open to several artistic arenas, including performance, Indigenous cultural works, film, and visual arts. I strongly encourage all northern artists to apply.

In conclusion, I would again like to congratulate Jack Penney on his cinematic success on the

national stage as he has a very bright future ahead of him, and I'm proud to call him my constituent and my neighbour. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members' statements. Member for Monfwi.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATION WITHIN THE
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Speaker. [Translation] There are a lot of workers in the Northwest Territories. There are approximately 5,000 employees. Not only that, but we have a lot of workers all over the place, Indigenous and Inuit, Metis people. They are hired by who they are, and sometimes in the Northwest Territories, people are hired differently. [Translation ends] [Microphone turned off] ...single source of work in the Northwest Territories. It is the largest single employer of the Indigenous people. That makes our government absolutely essential for informing the policies of Indigenous people. No matter how you look at it, our Indigenous people look to our government for work and opportunity.

Madam Speaker, it's not only to keep food on tables of our Dene, Inuvialuit, and Metis people. It's also to ensure that our government reflects on the values and cultures of our people. This is why I'm so troubled by the current underrepresentation of the Indigenous people of our government. Indigenous people make up 50 percent of this population of the Northwest Territories, but they make up only 30 percent of the GNWT workforce. It's been stuck at the low rate for so long, Madam Speaker, decades and decades. It's time that our government got serious about fixing this disparity. It's time that we tackle the root cause.

This talk about education, because education is the key to employment and, as we all know, Indigenous Northerners trail behind non-Indigenous on the education front, both in high school and post-secondary. Until we deal with this education gap, the deck will remain stacked against the Indigenous seeking work in our government. Some people think the education gap will not be solved in our lifetime. They think it's big, too big, too complex, but Madam Speaker, they're totally wrong. Break a big problem down to component parts, it's not a big problem at all. The education gap is no different. It is underrepresented of our people in our government.

Madam Speaker, here is a real example drawn from this government's stats. The problem of underrepresentation is really a huge challenge of male representation. Female representation in the GNWT is within acceptable limits. In fact,

Indigenous male employment, that's the culprit. They have half the employment rate of women. Indigenous men make up nine percent of total GNWT workforce. Nine percent, Madam Speaker. I will have questions to the Minister of Finance pertaining to this. Masi.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members' statements. Member for Range Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EULOGY FOR MAX WARD

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Madam Speaker, Max Ward was born on November 22, 1921, in Edmonton, Alberta. In 1940, Max joined the Royal Canadian Air Force and received his pilot's wings in 1941. Max worked as an instructor at various training bases during the Second World War until its end in 1945. After being discharged from the air force, Max received his commercial pilots licence and began his flying career as a bush pilot in Yellowknife.

In 1946, Max started Polaris Charter Company Ltd., carrying passengers throughout the Arctic, including prospectors and supplies into mining exploration camps. In 1948, Max and George Pigeon formed Yellowknife Airways, combining their two aircraft into one company. Max moved to Alberta after liquidating his share in 1949. It wasn't the last the North saw of Max, Madam Speaker. In 1953, he acquired a 14-passenger single-engine Otter and launched Wardair Ltd. into commercial service.

Madam Speaker, Max Ward revolutionized the aviation industry in Canada's North. Wardair expanded every year, and in 1957, he purchased the company's first heavy aircraft, a Bristol Freighter, and eventually made the first landing of an aircraft on wheels at the Geographic North Pole. In 1966, Wardair became the third major Canadian carrier to offer a pure jet aircraft when they purchased the Boeing 727, the first ever in Canada. By 1973, they had become Canada's largest international air charter carrier, but times change and Max sold the company in 1989 to Pacific Western Airlines, bringing an end to one of the greatest chapters in the history of Canadian aviation.

The impact Max had on the Canadian aviation industry has been immeasurable, Madam Speaker. He was inducted into the Canadian Aviation Hall of Fame in 1974, was awarded the Order of Canada in 1975, and was inducted into the Alberta Order of Excellence in 1989, amongst a host of other awards. Max helped blaze the trail for generations of pilots to explore the world around them and to find a home in the North, where they could fly one of the most unique aviation experiences in the

world today. Madam Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Max passed away peacefully on November 2, 2020, in Edmonton, Alberta at 98 years of age. His contribution to the Northwest Territories will forever be remembered. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family. Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors of the gallery. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. Member for Nunakput.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 466-19(2): INUVIK TO TUKTOYAKTUK HIGHWAY

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today, my question is for the Minister of Infrastructure in regard to the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway. Would the Minister commit to meeting with the mayor and the Tuktoyaktuk Community Corporation chair to come up with a plan to address the concerns in the letter that was sent to the Minister's office? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am travelling with the Infrastructure team to the Beaufort-Delta the week of November 17th. I will get in touch with the Member to see if we can make some time to be able to discuss the letter that was sent to me on Friday. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MR. JACOBSON: We'll invite you to Tuktoyaktuk on November 18th. The GNWT is currently sitting on \$450 million capital plan that seems to have trouble getting out the door. Why can't the GNWT look at projects that are to be done by the local contractors around the territory, to prioritize them, help them stimulate our regional economies during this pandemic? The ITH would be a great place to start. What is the GNWT planning to find the necessary funding?

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: We are currently doing some assessment on the condition of the road. Once we get that back, we will be able to determine and perhaps even build a case for the project and then determine what is the next step. I understand that the letter from the community identifies a bunch of specific areas along the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway that do need some work. That is

something that we can build a case for once we get the report.

MR. JACOBSON: With our new regional energy project going to get underway, M18, IRC, we will have many heavy loads on the ITH. Wear and tear from tractor-trailers, 18-wheelers coming with LNG into Inuvik to service community. Having no budget and funding in place to get that road ready prior to that happening, that needs to be done. We could do studies, it's studied. We had the former Minister there in the community herself come and do the road, so we've seen some potholes and lost -- you see it's low and the grade is level with the highway. I think there are certain places, and it's probably between \$5 million to \$10 million worth of work coming up. February, coming up in the budget sessions, I'm asking for \$10 million for the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway to get that service done. Is the Minister willing to work with the community and myself to get that project started?

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: The process would be to define the scope and the need, then come up with a plan and then cost it out and then come forward with a supplementary. That's the process of looking at some funding for this work. I don't know how much it's going to cost, but it's something that we can work with the Member on.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Minister for that. In 2015, when we got that road approved in this House, I could tell you, when we had the Prime Minister attend, in the day it was Stephen Harper who came and told us that we were getting the funds. The GNWT said it was the ITH, the Tuktoyaktuk to Inuvik Highway, but he corrected everybody that it's the Dempster Highway. It's an extension of the Dempster Highway. The funding that we get for the Dempster, it would be easier to keep it as just the Dempster Highway, not unless the community wants to rename the road. I think the investment of the federal government in regard to all the oil and gas they have up there, we could get out of debt. Just help me help you. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Minister, did you have any comments? Thank you. Oral questions. Member for Deh Cho.

QUESTION 467-19(2):
FIRST NATIONS HIRING

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Speaker. The geography of the Northwest Territories is made up of the different representative land areas of First Nation, Metis, and Inuvialuit groups. This demographic representation should dictate how the

Northwest Territories is governed, and for that matter, the workforce should be representative of the people the public service serves. My question to the Minister of Finance is: what commitment can the GNWT make to increase representation of the majority demographic of the Northwest Territories into the public service and, most notably, into senior management? Mahsi.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Speaker. There are quite a number of programs already in existence that are meant to support and encourage applicants to the public service and growth within the public service. One of the newer things that is being rolled out imminently is a framework that will address exactly the question of the Member, which is to create some targets department by department, including into the management ranks. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi to the Minister for her answer. I just want to say this with no prejudice or disrespect to my Yellowknife colleagues: what is noted is that the majority of the public service jobs are in Yellowknife, and the many new positions that are being created are being located in Yellowknife. Can the Minister explain why this arrangement continues with no regard for the outlying communities?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: One of the other commitments of the 19th Legislative Assembly, of course, is to increase employment in regional centres. That is a commitment of the 19th Assembly and of this government and is certainly one that the Department of Finance also plays a role in. There are ongoing efforts to ensure that, when new positions are being created, efforts are made to consider whether they have to, in fact, be centralized in the capital, which sometimes is the case, depending on the nature of the work, depending on the nature of the role to be played. If it is not the case, then it need not be centred here. For instance, recently, ISSS had some positions created within the last year, and they were all located in Fort Smith because it was recognized that they did not have to be located in the capital. Those efforts are ongoing.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi to the Minister for that. I didn't hear of any positions going to the small communities. I recall a program in the GNWT that is to promote residents, or I believe only current employees, with an option to move up in the ranks. The program is the associate director program, where an employee can job shadow an existing director for two years to eventually take over as director. I believe it's in the event the director is

planning on leaving the GNWT workforce. The program had real ambition as a succession planning success story. Can the Minister review the number of directors' positions in the GNWT and how many are actually First Nations?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I certainly do have those numbers and can provide those numbers to the House and to the Member. I don't have them at my fingertips, as I wasn't expecting to be called on to give those numbers here, but I would be more than happy to provide that. I just would note that, certainly, succession planning has been and remains a challenge for many organizations, and the government is no different. I certainly appreciate bringing some attention to the need to continue our succession planning here in the GNWT.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary. Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Speaker. I know first-hand, working for the GNWT for over 11 years, that this program was in place. As an employee of the GNWT, I had a problem even gaining access to this program. Nobody wanted to recognize it. There may be many succession planning documents out there. The last one, I think, was the 2020 A Brighter Future, which probably expired this year, and no actions have ever been taken for any planning documents. Where I was getting just lip service -- and I'm telling you first-hand that I had problems even trying to move up within the GNWT. I wonder if the Minister can commit to reviewing the associate director program and ensure that these will be filled by First Nations residents of the Northwest Territories? Mahsi.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I will certainly commit to reviewing the succession planning that is under way within the GNWT. As I have indicated at the beginning of the Member's questions, the direction right now is to develop the Indigenous framework, have that go department by department, and create some targets that will then be applicable to each department. Within that, of course, it includes the need for succession planning, the need for those targets to include management, so I will make the commitment that we are going to look at those targets. I want to provide some flexibility that we aren't necessarily doing that with a succession planning program that may no longer, as the Member has pointed out, be the one that is at the forefront. Yes, again, the commitment is to make sure that we're putting the right targets in and that the targets include senior management. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

QUESTION 468-19(2):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY

MS. MARTSELOS: Madam Speaker, the Minister must be very firm with all of the senior management within the government to ensure that the Affirmative Action Policy is followed. Mechanisms must be put in place to address the gaps, and if not followed, there has to be a process of meaningful appeals with a neutral panel and very concise direction. Does the Minister agree? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I certainly would agree that there should be a meaningful appeal process. There are, indeed, staffing appeals. They are conducted by staffing review officers who are, in fact, outside of the government and appointed by me as the Minister responsible for the public service. That flows from the fact that, yes, simply put, I agree that there has to be a proper, fair, and neutral appeals process. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: The Minister must also be able to discipline those senior managers who are not following the policy. This should be done through job evaluations or disciplinary letters on their work files. Strong, decisive action must be taken to address this issue. Does the Minister agree?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I certainly would agree that every department, through its deputy minister, will need to take responsibility to help ensure that the GNWT continues to do better in terms of what we're doing to follow the Affirmative Action Policy. The goal here is to have a representative workforce. The Affirmative Action Policy is one of the tools that we use to achieve that. However, Madam Speaker, the way that we will do that through deputy ministers is by ensuring that there are some clear targets and a clear plan for each of them within their department that they can implement and that that can then be followed through on to ensure that they are then in turn each doing that.

MS. MARTSELOS: The Minister has an ability to make a difference on this whole file. Leadership must be shown at the top in order to advance the Government of the Northwest Territories' affirmative action to its fullness. Does the Minister agree?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I could not agree more. It has to start from the top, and that includes, obviously, this House; it includes each Minister in their responsibility for their departments; and it includes each deputy minister within their

departments. That is one of the hopes of the framework is that it will now create meaningful targets that are department-specific and something that can actually be followed and looked at so that we know that it's not just the Minister responsible for a public service who has to be responsible for this but that every department, every Minister, and every deputy minister is going to be responsible and know exactly what they are responsible for.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Madam Speaker, there can be no more gaps, no excuses, no nepotism, no conflicts of interest, no hiring our friends, no tailoring job descriptions to match certain people's resumes, only strictly professional, neutral decisions based on qualifications. Will the Minister commit to changing the way senior management and human resource superintendents apply the Affirmative Action Policy to accomplish its original intent? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: What I want to commit to doing is ensuring that every department, in the chain of hiring that goes through that department in cooperation and in conjunction with staff from human resources, is indeed taking responsibility to ensure a representative public service and indeed is taking responsibility to follow the Affirmative Action Policy but also to be conscious of their own biases and act in such a way that we are not relying on them. The point of human resources is to try to create a system and a process that is fair, that is open, and that acknowledges that human beings will naturally at times have to look outside of themselves and have to have structures and processes to help them act without bias, to help them act in a neutral way to accomplish exactly what it is that the Member is asking me. I am certainly going to commit to ensuring that, again, we have those processes, that clear target, and something that works and is applicable to each and every department throughout that chain. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

QUESTION 469-19(2):
INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATION WITHIN THE
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My questions today are for the Premier. I am wondering if the Premier can tell me what specific direction she has given to the deputy ministers of each GNWT department to support building a representative workforce. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This government is committed to ensuring that we adhere to the Affirmative Action Policy. We have heard it for many, many years, and it's time to make sure that we do work on that. Deputy ministers are accountable for all of the hiring within their departments. They might not do it directly, but they are accountable for it.

Right now, as stated in the opening statement from the Minister's statement, the Department of Finance is currently developing a GNWT Indigenous recruitment and retention framework. Once that is done, this will be complemented by department-specific plans, as stated by the Minister, that set Indigenous representation targets and recruitment plans for each individual department. Then, these representation targets will be set for deputy ministers on an annual basis. Madam Speaker, every year, there is an annual evaluation of deputy ministers. Once this work is done, this accountability for our Affirmative Action Policy will be part of the evaluation framework that I conduct with the deputy ministers going forward. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MS. CLEVELAND: I am very excited to hear about the Indigenous framework that the GNWT is currently working on, but does this mean that there is currently no direction given to deputy ministers currently sitting at the heads of departments, waiting for this framework to be established?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Absolutely not. The Affirmative Action Policy, deputy ministers are aware that this is a priority of this government, and they are aware that they will be evaluated when it comes up. They are aware that this is coming.

MS. CLEVELAND: I am wondering if the current Cabinet will commit to reviewing the Affirmative Action Policy over the course of this term.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Absolutely. We will make a commitment to reviewing the Affirmative Action Policy within the term of this government.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Premier. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. This past spring, the GNWT committed to a Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls calls for justice action plan. I am wondering if the GNWT's plan will include an internal focus to shift the internal culture of the GNWT. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I would like to defer that to the Minister responsible for the Status

of Women or the Minister of Finance. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Speaker. That does involve both of those two hats coming together. The action plan that is going to be developed in response to the national inquiry is one that needs to, by the nature of what it is, involve a lot of engagement with Indigenous governments, with outside stakeholders, with members of the public, as well as members of the GNWT internally. As far as what will necessary be in that plan, that remains to be seen, subject to all that process.

That said, Madam Speaker, with respect to the corporate culture, the culture of the GNWT, absolutely. One of the goals of doing so is that it should and will change the culture of the GNWT as we go through that process. As well, similarly, the Indigenous framework that I have been speaking about today I hope will also be something that provides a shift and a change in mindset and a change in the way people look creatively at. For example, if somebody does not quite meet a cut-off target on an interview question, are there ways that they can look at that and question why somebody may not have done that?

In addition to that, one last comment, is that one of the other things that is coming out from the Department of Finance quite imminently is a new Indigenous cultural awareness and sensitivity training. This is an update, the first update in quite a few, many, years around the kind of training that all GNWT employees are going to be required to attend. Again, the goal of that is to culture-change and to change all of our mindsets and to increase everyone's awareness. I think there are quite a number of ways in which we do indeed want to change, change in culture, and evolve our culture and bring it forward to really be a leader in Canada. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

QUESTION 470-19(2):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES PAY GAP FOR INDIGENOUS
EMPLOYEES

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Minister and I both received an email recently in which the sender indicated that, in 2010, the pay gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous GNWT employees was reported as \$20,000 annually. Can the Minister tell me if the public service annual report still contains information

regarding the distribution of salaries between P1s, P2s, and P3s, and if not, why not? Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The report that will be tabled later today does not include that same documentation or data that was back in 2010. As for the evolution in the last 10 years of the report, I will have to find out what that evolution is. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MS. NOKLEBY: It's my understanding that the GNWT considers "Indigenous non-Aboriginal" as a distinct category in its HR policies. Can the Minister please explain to us what this means and how this designation is incorporated into GNWT statistics around meeting affirmative action goals?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: With respect to management positions or non-traditional positions, there are different designations depending on a person's status. Priority 1A is for Indigenous Aboriginal persons, so persons who are both born in the Northwest Territories and who have an Indigenous background, and female. Then priority 1B is the same categorizing of being Indigenous and Aboriginal but male. Number two is resident women. Number three is Indigenous non-Aboriginal persons or resident disabled persons. Last, there is no priority. With respect to all other competitions, again, that's the non-management competitions and things that are in the non-traditional category, this is where you get your P1 or priority one, which is Indigenous Aboriginal persons; P2 which is Indigenous non-Aboriginal, in other words, someone born in the Northwest Territories but not of Indigenous descent; and then there is no priority. All of those different categories are considered in the data that gets gathered up by human resources to evaluate the nature of our public service.

MS. NOKLEBY: I've had numerous friends and constituents discuss with me their stories of qualified, educated, Indigenous Aboriginal candidates, or P1s, who are unable to advance within their departments, including in the Minister's own. Can the Minister please commit to performing a review of her own department's hiring and looking for the circles of friends in senior management that are often a barrier to the advancement of Indigenous candidates or for advancing complaints under her HR policies?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Since taking on the portfolio of the Department of Finance, one of the most frequent things that comes to my office from MLAs and from members of the public comes in around staffing and concerns around staffing processes and a desire to ensure fairness in staffing process, and ensuring that the Affirmative

Action Policy is properly being followed. Madam Speaker, in the vast majority of the cases that come forward when they are investigated, in fact, the policies have been applied and have been followed, and yet, the stories and the concerns keep coming. There is some sort of disconnect where people are applying and going through these processes and feeling that they're not being heard, and yet, the application of the process itself is being followed.

That is exactly the conversation that I have had directly with human resources. Human resources works hard and cares deeply about being a representative public service. To have these kinds of stories continue to come forward is not what anybody wants. It's not what the staff that work there want; it's not what they are working towards. Yes, I absolutely am committing to the fact there is, again, the framework approach that we're trying to utilize is meant to be one that's going to give each department looking at what are the barriers, what are the problems in the department. Is it a front end of recruitment? Is it at the advancement? Is it in succession planning? Is it in the structure of the interview? Is it in the job description? The answers might be different department by department. I want to ensure that the Member won't have to hear all those stories all over again. That is exactly the point of what we are doing with framework.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm glad to hear the Minister acknowledge the disconnect. I'm always hesitant when I hear about investigations or analysis done by a department on its own department. Maybe more of a comment, but it would be nice to having the Minister commit to having independent third parties look at the GNWT's policies. I don't believe that they are being followed and would like to see these change. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I'm not really sure what else to say. When those matters come to my desk, we take them back, we follow it carefully, and I don't just accept the responses that come back from the department. We make enquiries, and those responses are that, when they are being told that something is being followed, I do believe that people are not lying to me from the public service and that they are, in fact, saying the truth when they say that they followed a policy. That doesn't mean that we don't have things to fix. Madam Speaker, again, there are a lot of things being done right now. Staffing appeals, as I said earlier, are themselves done independently. The framework process that's being developed is department by department, and there are going to be targets for those in positions of authority and power within and

throughout the department, so they are meeting those targets along the way.

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

QUESTION 471-19(2):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Prior to creation of the Affirmative Action Policy, the deficit of Indigenous Aboriginal hires within the public sector has been and continues to be a problem for this government. Madam Speaker, will the Minister of Finance confirm the percentage of Indigenous Aboriginal men and women currently employed within the GNWT public sector and are we moving in a forward direction? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have the numbers for 2020 as of March 31, 2020, in front of me, Affirmative Action statistics. That is, Indigenous Aboriginal females make up just under 21 percent of the workforce. Indigenous Aboriginal males, just shy of nine percent of the workforce. As far as change over time, Madam Speaker, I will look at those numbers and provide them. I do have them here, just not right in front of me right now. I don't think there has been significant change over time from my recollection of the numbers, Madam Speaker.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: I thank the Minister for that answer. Will the Minister of Finance confirm the model used by this government to recruit and interview potential Indigenous Aboriginal candidates for positions within the GNWT?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I'll start even before the interview process takes place. What people may not realize is that there is actually quite a lot of information available on the GNWT's HR website about how to participate in an interview, how to prepare, how to submit a resume. There is also the opportunity for people to contact someone at human resources to assist them with the preparation of their materials before they apply and also to help them prepare for an interview. I think that's probably an underutilized and perhaps not even well-known opportunity that is available.

As far as once someone is in the actual interview itself, the Department of Finance human resources does use what is called behavioural-based interviews. The idea being that people are encouraged to tell stories and to speak about personal experiences rather than being asked more

of the sort of answering questions in a more formulaic way or a more formalized way. Part of the idea there is that it is supposed to be an opportunity to create a better type of communication and dialogue for people in an interview.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Will the Minister of Finance confirm that Indigenous Aboriginal culture is incorporated into the recruitment and interview process?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I think I probably just answered that in my last description, but I may have misheard, I didn't have my earpiece in there. That's exactly the idea is to try to create opportunities for anyone that's applying and anyone that's within the application process and the interview process to be able to speak and communicate in a way other than just the traditional asking of a question and having to provide a correct or specific answer but instead be able to tell stories. Part of the reason there has been a change in the Indigenous cultural awareness training and sensitivity program is so that all members of the public service are themselves aware that there are different ways of communicating, aware that there are different backgrounds, aware that there are language differences, and that when they are engaging with someone and trying to recruit someone that they bring that awareness with them, that they become culturally aware, and that they are better placed to actually have engagements that are more meaningful and more respectful.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the Minister of Finance confirm that all interviews conducted by the GNWT have Indigenous Aboriginal team members or at the minimum, are the team members provided training with respect to Indigenous Aboriginal culture to remove any bias and provide fairness? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I was just hoping to pull up the numbers for human resources in terms of number of Indigenous Aboriginal persons that are in human resources. I think their numbers actually are relatively good. Notwithstanding, I cannot say that every single hiring team has an Indigenous person on that team, but I am happy to say that, with the introduction of the cultural awareness and sensitivity training program that's coming out in the next few months, that that is going to be mandatory for all GNWT employees and that, once that is in place and once staff continue to go through it, it is certainly our hope that that is going to have a culture change and that it's going to change the way that people are interacting one with another in terms of our knowledge and our

awareness and our sensitivity. I am happy to be able to at least confirm that that is on the horizon, and we are hopeful that it will be a program that will be really a leader in Canada. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

QUESTION 472-19(2):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate my colleagues' comments today and the Minister. I am confident that we will create targets in our departments and review the Affirmative Action Policy and make some progress on this. I think you have to recognize that this is a systemic problem that has multiple solutions and there are multiple tools. One of those which I believe we can use is the tool of secondments. In 2015, the Minister for human resources announced secondments to Indigenous governments and really brought this up as a win-win situation, and it allowed us to send GNWT employees into our communities to get them out of Yellowknife, to build capacity in those Indigenous governments, and hopefully, ultimately, devolve some of those powers. My question for the Minister of Finance is: how many GNWT employees are presently seconded to Indigenous governments?

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: [Microphone turned off] ...right now with Indigenous governments. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Finance, can you repeat that? You didn't have the microphone.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I'm sorry. Eight, Madam Speaker.

MR. JOHNSON: I do view this as a tool that ultimately allows many of our public servants, the majority of which are in Yellowknife, to get into our communities to work with Indigenous governments. I believe partnerships could work the other way, where we bring Indigenous governments, employees into the public service. I think we in this House agree that self-government is the future, but we also need to build that agreement and understanding within both bureaucracies. My question for the Minister of Finance is: is she willing to put together something and reach out to our Indigenous governments and make sure they are aware and are willing to partnership on this tool we have?

HON. CAROLINE WAWAZONEK: That's an easy yes. I'm more than happy to continue that kind of engagement, and I say "continue" because there is already the building capacity in Indigenous governments program. It is an effort to do precisely what the Member is getting at, to support secondment arrangements with Indigenous governments across regions. There will be funding from the Department of Finance for up to 10 placements a year and then up to \$40,000 placement. It is certainly my hope that that will be a successful program to encourage the exchange of knowledge, the exchange of experience, and the increasing of capacity across both governments.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes. I'm glad to hear that. I think part of my reason for talking about this is just so that everyone in the public service listening, knows that they can go to their management and asked to be placed in an Indigenous government for a period of time, that they can go into the communities and get first-hand experience because, as much as I think cultural awareness training is a step in the right direction, there's really nothing that replaces going to work for an Indigenous government and seeing their struggles. Is the Minister willing, as part of our whole public service renewal and a number of initiatives that we are doing, to set targets for secondments?

HON. CAROLINE WAWAZONEK: I'm inclined to say "yes," but I want to be cautious. That also requires ensuring that the Indigenous governments are prepared and interested and willing to be receiving, hopefully, all these many, many employees who want to go and participate in this program. What I will say is that I, certainly, want to see that the 10 placements that are available get filled. In and of itself, there's a target there, and I'll certainly commit to keeping that 10 placements as a target.

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

MR. JOHNSON: No further questions, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Monfwi.

QUESTION 473-19(2):
INDIGENOUS MALE EMPLOYMENT WITHIN THE
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Speaker. The Minister of Finance talked about HR cultural awareness training program. I certainly hope it's not a video training program. The Minister in her department has to engage an elder in the community. I just want to make that clear.

[Translation] Madam Speaker, I'd like to talk about how, in terms of hiring, our people are held back within the government. When the GNWT hires, especially the men, they are at the bottom, the bottom of the list. The Minister of Finance, I have a question for you. It's under the Minister of Finance. People are being hired under the Minister of Finance. [Translation ends]

The Minister of Finance, who is also responsible for HR, what special initiatives is the Minister of Finance targeting this group of young male employment within GNWT, the number is so low; young Indigenous males, specifically, to increase their success in a work environment? Masi, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWAZONEK: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We are not specifically targeting men with this program. The intention at this point is to target Indigenous Aboriginal Northerners with respect to the framework, and that would include everything from ensuring that we look at the recruitment front end of it. If there's more Indigenous Northerners applying, I suppose if there are more Indigenous male Northerners applying, then that is more opportunity to have them hired. Once they are hired, if they are again able to participate in lots of the different programs that are currently available, whether it's management, training, whether it's the secondment opportunities, if they're able to participate in those programs, then they're moving up in the programs. If every department has targets within their departments, then each one can be held accountable to ensure that those things are happening. All of that is part of the framework that starts from even before someone is hired right up to the point of succession to senior management. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MR. LAFFERTY: I am glad the Minister brought up the target. I think it's very important to have each department have targets. When I talk about Indigenous male, eight, nine percent within GNWT. That is very low considering that 50 percent population of Aboriginal people in the Northwest Territories, only 30 percent of our workforce is Aboriginal. Out of that, only eight to nine percent male. It is disappointing to see those stats. It's been there a long time now. I talk about decades. I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance if there could be established targets within each department to specifically hire those individuals within the Indigenous hiring; more specifically when I touch on male because we need to increase that number, as well.

HON. CAROLINE WAWAZONEK: Yes. The Indigenous framework that we are developing for the recruitment and retention framework is meant to have targets, department by department. That's really the answer to the question, Madam Speaker. It will have hiring targets. I have not been given any sense that men over women is going to be part of the targeting, but Indigenous affirmative action candidates will be part of those targets.

MR. LAFFERTY: I'm glad the Minister is committed to providing those targets within each department. It's very important that we increase our Indigenous workforce within GNWT. Enough of talking about the 30 percent over the last 20, 30 years. Just put that into action. Within the life of this Assembly, I would love to see an increase in Aboriginal representation from 30 to 40, 50 percent, whatever the case is. I'm glad the Minister's committing to that. Our sister territory of Nunavut understands the problem of under representation of Indigenous male workforce, especially in the public service. That government had embarked on an aggressive strategy to empower young Inuit males to help them succeed in aspiration of a work environment. Is the Minister aware of those Nunavut government initiatives? Has she been paying attention to Nunavut approach to this issue, the challenge that we're faced with?

HON. CAROLINE WAWAZONEK: One of the first parts of the Indigenous recruitment retention framework action that's happening is, indeed, to conduct a jurisdictional scan to ensure that we are utilizing best practices from all jurisdictions, and Nunavut is certainly a core example, as is the Yukon. Both territories will be part of that, and we will indeed be incorporating best practices from those jurisdictions.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Speaker. I'm glad that the Minister will be taking those best practices into consideration. My question is: when can we see those adaptations into our current policy within the department or departments in the GNWT? Madam Speaker, masi.

HON. CAROLINE WAWAZONEK: The work is already under way, and it is my expectation that both the framework and implementation plans for departments will be completed within the 2021-2022 fiscal year. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 474-19(2):
FRANCOPHONE SCHOOL ADMISSIONS AND
FUNDING

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madame la Presidente. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. The Commission scolaire francophone des Territoires du Nord-Ouest were pleased with the new regulations on school admissions, though a few issues remain outstanding. First, can the Minister tell us why GNWT persists in its appeals of the two court decisions on refused admissions under the former ministerial directive? Why don't we just drop the cases? Mahsi, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have made public comments on this, so it's on the record. I have had frank conversations with the chair of the CSFTNO, and so we are both aware of each other's positions. I can have a frank conversation with the Member. However, as you know, Madam Speaker, Rule 24(g) prohibits the discussion of matters that are before the courts, and I don't want to offend the rules of this Assembly. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: I am always up for a frank conversation with my friend across the Chamber. There is a proposal to renovate the current Garderie Plein Soleil daycare at a cost of approximately \$1.2 million. When the first request was made, funds were available from Heritage Canada if GNWT matched the funds, but the project has been rejected twice by our government, even after Heritage Canada increased its potential funding. Can the Minister explain why the project has been rejected twice, even after Heritage Canada funding was increased?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: The department worked closely with the proponent on the proposal to the federal government, but in the end, the cost was just too much for the GNWT. We have an Early Learning and Childcare Infrastructure Fund that is \$500,000 a year for the entire territory, and our cost for this project would have been greater than that for the creation of six spaces. It couldn't be justified under our fiscal reality.

MR. O'REILLY: The reason why I'm raising this, of course, is the French daycare Galerie Plein Soleil is actually located in one of our schools, something that I think we're trying to aim for in ensuring that we make good use of our school spaces, as well, and collocate daycares. As I understand it, there was to be a dramatic improvement in the use of space in the current daycare. That would add six spaces, and then a second phase would add additional spaces. Of course, increasing daycare spaces is a priority of the 19th Assembly, and so I think we're missing out on this cost-shared opportunity. When will the Minister accept this

proposal that will allow Galerie Plein Soleil to respond to the huge demand for daycare spaces for francophone children in Yellowknife?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: It's not a matter of accepting the proposal. The proposal has been looked at, and as I stated, it was over half-a-million dollars for six spaces. It sounds like there was a second phase, which I'm guessing would have been more. There were additional improvements to the space. I understand that, but the fact is that we have limited resources. We have a lot of needs all over the territory, and there are competing priorities. I wish I could fund all the spaces and especially French-first-language spaces. I know that there is a limited number of those in the territory, but the numbers didn't add up in this instance. It's a shame, but we're still willing to work closely with the proponent and see what we can do in the future.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madame la Presidente. I want to thank the Minister for that. Of course, I'm going to keep pressing this issue. My next question, though, is about GNWT policies that require CSFTNO to sometimes conduct internal workplace investigations. Of course, the employees are French-speaking. The GNWT offers assistance with workplace investigations but in English only. When CSFTNO has to do this work, it costs them about \$64,000 a year. Will the Minister commit to making an arrangement with CSFTNO to reimburse these additional costs or provide these services in French, [English translation not available]? Mahsi, Madam Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: The Member is correct. The GNWT doesn't provide these services at all. It doesn't have the ability to provide these services currently. School boards are funded for their operations, including things like workplace assessments. That said, though, I will have a discussion with the Minister of Finance and see what kind of progress we can make on this. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

QUESTION 475-19(2):

LOCATION OF RCMP DETACHMENT IN MONFWI

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Speaker. [Translation] I want to ask the Department of Justice a question regarding there is supposed to be a new RCMP station in Whati. I would like to ask him questions regarding the Justice Department. [End of translation] I have questions for the Minister of Justice pertaining to the process of how we allocate a structure from one community to another

community. I am referring to the RCMP detachment out of Whati to Gameti within the same region. I'd like to know from the Minister: what would be the process to establish that type of dialogue within my region and the other players involved? Masi.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I've had conversations with the Member about this. I was supposed to meet with the chief of Gameti, but our schedules didn't line up during this time, which isn't unusual; but I look forward to that conversation. The detachment in Whati is being replaced. It's a federal asset, and there is a process by which the federal government surplus their goods. That's the process we would have to follow. We did reach out to the commanding officer of "G" Division, and he said he is open to having that conversation to see if that can be surplus. Now, it's just a matter of advancing those conversations, and I'm happy to do that. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MR. LAFFERTY: [Translation] As we stand here today, regarding the Ministers, they are responsible for each department, and they also work with the RCMP. [End of translation] Does the Minister agree that the Whati RCMP detachment should stay within the region, from Whati to Gameti? Gameti badly needs an RCMP detachment to hold those individuals who are causing issues in the community.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: The detachment in Whati right now, I believe it's about 30 years old. It's being replaced because it's no longer up to the RCMP standards. If the detachment were to be moved to Gameti, it wouldn't be positioned as an RCMP detachment. They are getting rid of it because they don't want to use it as a detachment. That being said, in Gameti, I know, even when I was there years ago, the chief brought this up that, if someone is detained while the RCMP are in the community, they keep them in the back of the truck for however long they need to, or they put them in the community government office. There is not a good system in place to hold people who are detained. If this asset was transferred, it doesn't meet RCMP standards, but I don't believe an office or the back of a cruiser would, either, in terms of that. I can't say whether or not I believe it should be. I'm not sure what condition the building is in, what the cost would be to move this building. There're a lot of these variables. In some instances, it's very expensive to try and lift up a building and haul it and set it up somewhere else, and it might fall apart along the way. There is a lot to look into. However, it could be an improvement over what is in place now, and like I said, I am happy to look into that.

MR. LAFFERTY: I would like to ask the Minister about the process in also engaging the community, the community chiefs, and my Tlicho Government. I would like to know from the Minister what kind of engagement has taken place so far with respect to RCMP, the Commissioner, and also at the federal level within the Justice Department and my leadership. Could the Minister provide me with an update of what has been happening or what would be the process of engaging those parties?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: As I stated earlier, the Member was an intermediary between me and the chief in Gameti, and we were supposed to meet. Things did not line up, and so we have not had that meeting yet, but I am happy to have those meetings, work with the Member, and meet with the Tlicho Government. We have already reached out to the RCMP, and now we need to take that next step. I have told the department we need to take that next step sooner than later, so the wheels are turning. I am committed to moving forward with this and exploring any options that we have and including the Member and updating the Member as we make process.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Speaker. [Translation] Today, in Gameti, they have been asking for the station for a long time. We have two RCMP in the community. Sometimes, when they are in a situation, where are they going to hold the people? They do not have any place. They have a small building that they hold people there, which is not right, so I would like to ask the Minister a question. [Translation ends] Obviously, the community of Gameti has been pushing an RCMP detachment for a number of years, and I think this is a great opportunity for us. Yes, it may not be suitable, but it is a facility that can be utilized in some form or fashion in Gameti. What I am after, Madam Speaker, is: can we expedite this process where, during -- the winter road's coming from Whati to Gameti, if we can reach out to RCMP division, the federal counterparts, to expedite the process, so at least try to make it before this winter road or the following winter road if it's possible? The community is badly expressing a need for a detachment in Gameti. Masi, Madam Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: When the federal government is involved, I cannot really commit to expediting. It's just the nature of the beast. However, I told the department that it's probably been a month since this first came up and that I want to start moving on it immediately, so I am doing my best. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

QUESTION 476-19(2):
ENFORCEMENT ON RESERVE LANDS

MS. MARTSELOS: Madam Speaker, I want to be able to ask the Minister of Lands: what is the Minister's policy on enforcement, for enforcement on reserve lands?

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Minister of Lands.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Presently, we do not enforce policies on reserve land. However, the Member has asked in a meeting with Salt River that we look into this. I have made a commitment to her and to the chief that we will be reaching out to the federal government to try to work with that. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: It is extremely important that the Government of the Northwest Territories makes policy with the federal government to ensure that enforcement on reserve lands is a priority. The people who belong to the Northwest Territories, just because we have an affirmed land claim, does that mean we are different, even though we are residents of the Northwest Territories? I would like to ask the Minister: is there a timeline to ensure that there is enforcement on reserve lands?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: As I have told the Member here in the House, we need to work with the federal government, and we need to respect the jurisdiction of both the federal government and the territorial government. We are trying to work with them. The Member has been very clear on some of the challenges that they face with ENR and with Lands, so we are trying to work with this. It is a process, and we need to be respectful of the process. Again, it involves EIA, as well.

MS. MARTSELOS: Does the Minister agree that it's all right for poachers to go on reserve lands and kill wildlife, that they do not enforce anything on reserve lands? I would like to know if the Minister agrees with that. We are members of the Northwest Territories, and we have rights. Wouldn't you agree, Minister?

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please direct your questions to me. Minister of Lands.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I have tried to explain here, and maybe I am not getting the message out there properly, there is a process, and we need to respect the process. On reserve lands, it's federal jurisdiction. We need to work with the federal government, Salt River First Nation, and the departments to deal with this matter. I understand it's been a long-standing issue for this Member, from when she was former chief, but we are willing to work with it. We have reached out to the federal

government. We are working with EIA on this, so it's March, the whole department is working on it. Madam Speaker, we are working on it.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Madam Speaker, the claim was signed in 2002 on June the 22nd. That is 18 years. That is a long time without enforcement on reserve lands. I think it's time that this Minister and the Premier and the executive realize Salt River's goals to ensure that we get enforcement on reserve lands. Wouldn't he agree? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: I will wear my ENR hat here. Yes, I agree we need enforcement in there. We need to do it right, and that means we have to work with the federal government and Salt River First Nation to deal with this matter. I understand it's been since 2002. Again, we need to work with everybody in place so we do it right. I understand the Member, and I am hearing her. We have reached out, like I said, to EIA, Salt River First Nation to have this as a discussion, and we are working on it. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Lands. Time for oral questions has expired. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Minister of Finance.

Returns to Written Questions

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I do have two returns to written questions, which I understand will be tabled by the clerk.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Mr. Clerk.

RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 17-19(2): COVID-19 SPENDING IMPACTS

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I do have a return to written question 17-19(2) asked by the Member for Kam Lake on October 15, 2020, regarding COVID-19 spending impacts.

As of September 30, 2020, the Government of the Northwest Territories has spent approximately \$61 million on COVID-19 related expenditures. As with all government spending, these COVID-19 related expenditures will directly contribute to NWT gross domestic product. Government of the Northwest Territories' expenditures account for between 50 and 60 percent of NWT nominal gross domestic product.

Madam Speaker, the GNWT is projecting expenditures and foregone revenues to be approximately \$175 million for 2020-2021. There has been total support announced by the Government of Canada of just over \$92 million, which results in a potential impact on the GNWT of \$83 million. The COVID-19 related expenditure shocks will reduce the operating surplus that is needed to fund the capital budget.

Madam Speaker, COVID-19 related spending has helped NWT businesses retain staff, make rent and mortgage payments, and has provided other financial relief. Efforts to understand the needs of the NWT's business community and the effectiveness of the Government of the Northwest Territories' COVID-19 economic support programs cannot be determined without polling businesses directly. While government support has helped numerous NWT businesses, businesses have also shown their own ingenuity in finding ways to keep their doors open. Business innovations, like curbside pickup, "stay-cations" targeting local tourists, and phone or video appointments, have allowed NWT businesses that would otherwise have been forced to close to continue to operate during the pandemic.

NWT businesses most severely affected by the pandemic, and those that were most at risk when the coronavirus pandemic hit in March 2020, are concentrated in four areas of the economy: hospitality, retail, air transportation, and personal services. The Government of the Northwest Territories' and the Government of Canada have provided financial support targeted towards these severely affected and at-risk economic sectors.

COVID-19-related spending has directly aided NWT aviation companies and prevented them from closing despite severe drops in air passengers. To date, not a single NWT aviation company has been forced to close their business, which in turn has supported other businesses that rely on aviation services to transport goods and the government that needed air transport in response to the health crisis.

The Government of the Northwest Territories' has supported NWT businesses through Business Development and Investment Corporation Loan Payment deferral or reduction, and Business Development and Investment Corporation working capital loans. To date:

- 162 Business Development and Investment Corporation accounts representing 126 NWT businesses were approved payment deferral or reduction.
- Of these 162 accounts, 107 were approved extensions through the end of the fiscal year,

bringing the total deferment/reduction savings from April 2020 to March 2021 to \$3.3 million. This total consists of \$3.1 million in deferments for 145 accounts and \$183,208 in loan payment reductions for 17 accounts.

- 89 Business Development and Investment Corporation accounts representing 88 NWT businesses were approved working capital loans of \$2.3 million. A further seven accounts were withdrawn after approval.

As of October 23, 2020, the Support for Entrepreneur and Economic Development Policy program has supported NWT businesses as follows:

- 187 grants have been approved, totally nearly \$2.1 million.
- 59 of these approved grants, totaling \$319,588, are directly related to providing support due to the effects of COVID-19. These grants have helped NWT businesses purchase personal protective equipment, and supplement their operations in order to operate under the Chief Public Health Officer restrictions.

Madam Speaker, the NWT lost roughly 4,000 jobs during the coronavirus pandemic. Between February 2020 at the pre-COVID employment peak and May 2020, the COVID-19 trough, the number of jobs in Canada declined 18 percent, while the number of jobs in the NWT fell by 14 percent. Since then, the number of jobs has begun to recover, and as of July 2020, which is our most recent month of data, NWT jobs were 12.7 percent lower than what they were a year ago. By December 2020, it is projected that NWT jobs will have recovered to 90 percent of January 2020. The NWT jobs decline was less severe than the national average due to a combination of the following measures:

- Innovation by NWT businesses, which allowed many companies to find new markets and ways of delivering products and services;
- Large public sector, which acted as a stabilizer in the economy, allowing nearly 8,000 employees to work from home with regular income which was then spent at local NWT businesses, keeping consumer demand for NWT goods and services strong; and
- Active GNWT and federal government support programs, which supported both businesses and employees directly through such programs as aviation sector supports and the wage top-up program.

In May 2020, the hardest hit month of the pandemic, there were 820 active businesses in the NWT. For context, an active business is a business

with at least one employee. This number was 79 fewer than in May 2019, and 66 fewer than in January 2020. Of the 79 fewer NWT active businesses between May 2019 and May 2020, 85 percent were in the Services sector. Industries with the largest decline in NWT active businesses between May 2020 and May 2019 were:

- Retail Trade with 24 fewer active businesses;
- Accommodation and Food Services with 18 fewer active businesses;
- Other Services with eight fewer active businesses; and
- Construction with seven fewer active businesses.

Industries with the largest declines in active businesses were not necessarily the industries with the largest concentration of job losses. Compared to a year earlier, industries with the largest job losses in May 2020 were:

- Mining & Utilities with 830 fewer jobs;
- Accommodation and Food Services with 800 fewer jobs;
- Construction with 375 fewer jobs; and
- Retail with 330 fewer jobs.

The discrepancy between declines in active businesses and declines in jobs reflects the capital-use intensity of different industries and the distribution of large, medium, and small businesses across different industries. The decline in active businesses has been less severe in the NWT than in Canada as a whole. Between May 2019 and May 2020, there were 13 percent fewer active businesses in Canada compared to but just 8 percent fewer in the NWT. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 18-19(2): CAPITAL BUDGET CARRY-OVERS

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): I do have a return to written question 18-19(2) asked by the Member for Kam Lake on October 15, 2020, regarding capital budget carry-overs.

The Member asked for information about the amount of the capital budget that the Government of the Northwest Territories has carried over in each of the last five years. Madam Speaker, in response to the Member's question, later today, at the appropriate time, I will table a summary of the total annual capital carry-over by category. Additionally, the Member asked for a description of the reasons for the carry-overs by category. It is

worth noting for a capital project to be considered for carry-over, it must meet specific eligibility criteria under the Financial Administration Act and Financial Administration Manual:

- The amount requested for carry-over must be lapsed in the previous fiscal year; and
- A contractual obligation must exist, or substantial work has commenced on the project and cannot be completed in the planned timeframe.

Madam Speaker, over the past five years, capital carry-overs have been requested for a variety of reasons. There are some common reasons why projects experience delays, including:

- in the procurement process including the time required to develop and release tenders, project scope changes, bids in excess of approved budgets, and time required to negotiate final contract value;
- projects substantially completed but final contract payments withheld until deficiencies have been corrected by the contractor;
- multi- delays due to the regulatory and environmental assessment process;
- delays due to delivery times for materials and supplies and timing issues due to barge deliveries of materials;
- delays due to unfavorable weather that had a significant impact on the project delivery dates;
- delays year projects that required additional time for consultation with Indigenous partners, community governments and other stakeholders;
- delays due to negotiations with stakeholders on land use;
- delays due to time required to obtain land use permits and geotechnical survey results; and
- specific to the 2019-2020 capital carry-over requests, delays as a result of COVID-19, including the redeployment of contractor resources and GNWT employees.

While lengthy, this list is not exhaustive as each project is unique and there may be other more specific reasons in addition to these general examples.

In the Member's third question, she asked whether the reasons identified for a project to be carried-over point to internal or external capacity challenges within the Northwest Territories. Madam

Speaker, the detailed explanations provided by departments for capital project delays point to more than just internal or external capacity challenges. In some instances, delays in delivery of materials and supplies have had significant impacts on capital project timelines, which are often outside the control of either the contractor or the GNWT project management staff. Negotiations with stakeholders and external parties also impact project delivery timelines and are not within the control of the project management team. The short construction season in the NWT impacts also contractors' ability to complete projects on time. Any delays, internal or external, have an impact on project timelines, which is intensified by the short construction season.

Finally, the Member has asked what gaps the Government of the Northwest Territories has been able to identify to facilitate spending government capital dollars.

Madam Speaker, the capital carry-over process is a key mechanism used by the GNWT to facilitate capital spending; funding cannot transfer from one year to the next as the Financial Administration Act does not provide for multi-year appropriations. Using the carry-over process allows overall project budgets to remain unchanged; it is just spread over more fiscal years than was previously appropriated. This process reflects the reality of capital projects, the delays are often unavoidable and outside of the control of either the contractor or the project manager, and that projects are not often complete on the last day of the fiscal year. The capital carry-over process ensures that funding committed by the GNWT to be spent is available to be spent in the appropriate fiscal year.

As mentioned earlier, the criteria required to be met for the Financial Management Board to recommend a carry-over includes two specific criteria that an equal amount is lapsed and that a contract is in place or substantial work is completed. This ensures that departments do not continue to carry-over projects indefinitely as there must be a plan for expenditure. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to Commissioner's address. Item 11, Petitions. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, Reports of standing and special committees. Item 14, tabling of documents. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 226-19(2):
WHAT WE LEARNED: TOURISM STRATEGY
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY (1)
SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 2019

TABLED DOCUMENT 227-19(2):
WHAT WE LEARNED: TOURISM STRATEGY
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY (2)
MAY TO JUNE 2020

TABLED DOCUMENT 228-19(2):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES (NWT) FILM
COMMISSION 2020 NWT FILM & MEDIA
SECTOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT
REPORT: WHAT WE HEARD

TABLED DOCUMENT 229-19(2):
INTER-ACTIVITY TRANSFERS EXCEEDING
\$250,000 (APRIL 1 TO JUNE 30, 2020)

TABLED DOCUMENT 230-19(2):
PUBLIC SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2019/2020

TABLED DOCUMENT 231-19(2):
SUMMARY OF CAPITAL BUDGET CARRY-
OVERS FROM APRIL 1, 2015 – MARCH 31, 2020

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Speaker, I wish to table the following six documents: "What We Learned: Tourism Strategy Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (1) September to December 2019;" "What We Learned: Tourism Strategy Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (2) May to June 2020;" "Northwest Territories (NWT) Film Commission 2020 NWT Film & Media Sector Stakeholder Engagement Report: What We Heard;" "Inter-Activity Transfers Exceeding \$250,000 (April 1 to June 30, 2020);" "Public Service Annual Report 2019/2020;" and further to my return to Written Question 18-19(2), I also wish to table the "Summary of Capital Budget Carry-overs from April 1, 2015 - March 31, 2020." Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 232-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
368-19(2): CONTRACTS TO NORTHERN
TERRITORIES BUSINESSES AT GIANT MINE
REMIEDIATION PROJECT

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to table to following document: "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 368-19(2): Contracts to Northern Territories Businesses at Giant Mine Remediation Project." Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Tabling of documents. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

TABLED DOCUMENT 233-19(2):
2019 ANNUAL REPORT – OFFICE OF THE FIRE
MARSHALL

TABLED DOCUMENT 234-19(2):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES 911 2019-2020
ANNUAL REPORT

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to table the following two documents: "2019 Annual Report - Office of the Fire Marshall" and "Northwest Territories 911 2019-2020 Annual Report." Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, motions. Item 17, notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Item 18, first reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 21:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 2, 2020-
2021

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Nahendeh, that Bill 21, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2020-2021, be read for the first time. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. The motion is in order and is non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 21 has had its first reading. First reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 20:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE EMPLOYMENT
STANDARDS ACT

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act, be read for the second time. This bill amends the Employment Standards Act to provide an entitlement to unpaid emergency leave for employees who are unable to perform their duties because of an emergency; definitions that in apply in respect of emergency and extend the definition of care to apply in respect of emergency leave; establish regulation making authorities in respect of emergency leave and

provide that regulations made under this authority may have retroactive effect; establish confidentiality requirements in relation to leave; provide an exception to the periods of notice required for group terminations that applies in the case of an unforeseeable event or circumstance; clarify that a notice of termination for group termination may be given to concurrently with an individual notice of termination; and correct inconsistencies and errors identified in the act. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. The motion is in order. To the principle. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madame la Presidente. I support part of this bill. I support the emergency leave provisions that are being brought forward. In fact, I think it probably can and should have been done as part of an omnibus bill as part of our response to the COVID pandemic.

The part of the bill that causes me great concern is the exceptions to that it may provide for large layoffs. Currently, in the Legislation, if an employer has more than 50 employees, four weeks' notice is required, eight weeks if it's between 50 and 100 employees, 12 weeks between 100 and 300, 16 weeks if it's 300 or more employees. Clearly, the intention of the legislation was to ensure that, the larger the employer, that there is some advance notice given to their workers so that we don't flood the labour market with people being laid off. Larger employers, I think, are also better able to provide notice of this nature, given the greater size of their business.

I will be asking questions around what kind of cross-jurisdictional analysis has been done, what kind of consultation was done with organized labour in the preparation of this legislation, because I think that this will affect workers' rights. I will ask what kind of additional costs may be incurred by our government when a large employer lays off a large number of the employees and they come into the workplace and they may require income assistance, other kinds of support. I think there is going to be a cost for our government with these particular provisions.

I think it's also important that decisions around exceptions need to be made by a Minister. A Minister needs to be making that kind of decision, and the Minister should be held accountable. It should not be delegated to a staff person, and I think that we also need to look at what kind of appeal provisions may be required for this kind of a process. I certainly have a number of concerns with this bill. I look forward to a very thorough public review for the Standing Committee on Social Development, and I certainly will be encouraging organized labour to express their views on that part of the bill, as I would all members of the public, as

well. In short, Madam Speaker, I am very support of the emergency leave provisions but providing exceptions to the advanced notice for larger employers, that's something that caused me great concern. Mahsi, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. To the principle.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 20 has had second reading and will be referred to standing committee. Second reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

**BILL 21:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 2, 2020-
2021**

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Nahendeh, that Bill 21, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2020-2021, be read for the second time. This bill makes supplementary appropriations for operations expenditures of the Government of the Northwest Territories for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. The motion is in order. To the principle.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed. Motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 21 has had second reading. Second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Minister's Statement 77-19(2), National Housing Co-investment Fund; Tabled Document 165-19(2), Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 1-19(2), Report on Long-term Post-Pandemic Recovery, Recommendations to the GNWT; Tabled Document 166-19(2), Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 2-19(2): Report on the Long-term Post-Pandemic Recovery, Recommendations to the GNWT; Tabled Document 167-19(2), Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 3-19(2): Report on Long-Term Post-Pandemic Recovery - Recommendations to the GNWT; Tabled Document 181-19(2), Capital

Estimates 2021-2020, with Member for Hay River South in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): I call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the will of the committee? Mr. Norn.

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Chair. The committee wishes to deal with Tabled Document 181-19(2), Capital Estimates 2021-2022, the deferred departments and the concurrence motion. Marsi cho.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Norn. Committee, we will take a short break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): I call the Committee of the Whole back to order. Committee, we have agreed to resume consideration of Tabled Document 181-19(2), Capital Estimates 2021-2022. We will consider those departments that have previously been deferred by this committee. Before we return to those departments, we will go to the Minister of Finance for some opening comments. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As this Legislative Assembly did back with the 2020-2021 Main Estimates, we came together collectively and worked collaboratively on an approach to commit to investing in much needed infrastructure that is one of the priorities for this Legislative Assembly and for NWT residents. There are some commitments that arise, some that approach. They are as follows:

Federal Housing Co-Investment Fund - Northern Carve Out

Communities in the Northwest Territories are in need of new construction of mixed-income, mixed-use affordable housing. To provide eligible organizations the equity needed to apply for and start drawing down the \$60 million carve out from the Co-Investment Fund, I will commit to providing the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation a contribution of \$5 million in each of 2021-2022, 2022-2023, and 2023-2024, a total of \$15 million. The funding for the first year will be included in the annual funding contribution from the Department of Finance to Northwest Territories Housing Corporation through the 2021-2022 Main Estimates that will be considered at the February/March 2021 session.

Community Infrastructure

As I indicated during my fiscal update, COVID-19 will continue to have an impact on the government's fiscal situation. While I am confident the federal government will continue to help mitigate that impact, it will not be 100 percent dollars. However, reducing the municipal funding gap is a priority for this government, although it needs to be done in a fiscally responsible manner. I, therefore, commit to providing municipalities a one-time top-up of \$2.5 million in 2021-2022 towards that municipal funding gap. The funding will be included in the 2021-2022 Supplementary Appropriation No. 1 (Infrastructure Expenditures), to be considered during the February/March 2021 sitting of the Legislative Assembly.

Other Commitments

1. The Department of Infrastructure will be advancing 20 kilometres, from kilometre 70 to kilometre 90, of chipseal overlay on Highway No. 6 to Fort Resolution in 2021-2022. The department anticipates the project will start in May 2021 and be completed by the end of September. The total estimated cost of this project is \$900,000. The Department of Infrastructure will also be reviewing options to improve the access road to the Thebacha Campsite in Fort Smith. These additional chipseal projects will be funded from within the department's annual chipseal overlay program and do not require additional funding in the 2021-2022.
2. As Members all saw during our tour of the Northwest Territories Fire Centre during the caucus retreat earlier this year, the existing leased building is old and no longer meeting operational needs to ensure the GNWT is able to effectively manage forest fire activity in the Northwest Territories. I have, therefore, directed the Department of Finance to work with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to undertake a feasibility study by early 2021. This study will outline potential options that the Assembly may consider for a potential new fire centre.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Committee, we will start with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. The committee has previously considered the activity summaries for the department. We will return to the departmental summary on page 10. Are there any questions or comments from the committee? I will now call the departmental summary. Capital Estimates 2021-2022, Education, Culture and Employment, \$30,148,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Does the committee agree that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment is completed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, committee. We will now move onto the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. The committee has previously considered the activity summaries for the department. We will return to the departmental summary on page 15. Are there any questions or comments from the committee? I see none. I will now call the departmental summary. Capital Estimates 2021-2022, Environment and Natural Resources, \$2,159,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Does the committee agree that consideration of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources is completed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, committee. We will now move onto the Department of Finance. The committee has previously considered the activity summaries for the department. We will return to the departmental summary on page 25. Are there any questions or comments from the committee? I see none. I will now call the departmental summary. Capital Estimates 2021-2022, Finance, \$9,254,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Does the committee agree that consideration of the Department of Finance is completed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, committee. We will now move onto the Department of Health and Social Services. The committee has previously considered the activity summaries for the department. We will return to the departmental summary on page 29. Are there any questions or comments from the committee? I see none. I will now call the departmental summary. Capital Estimates 2021-2022, Health and Social Services, \$61,120,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Does the committee agree that consideration of the

Department of Health and Social Services is completed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, committee. We will now move onto the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment. The committee has previously considered the activity summaries for the department. We will return to the departmental summary on page 34. Are there any questions or comments from the committee? I see none. I will call the departmental summary. Capital Estimates 2021-2022, Industry, Tourism and Investment, \$14,250,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Does the committee agree that consideration of the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment is completed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, committee. We will now move onto the Department of Infrastructure. The committee has previously considered the activity summaries for the department. We will return to the departmental summary on page 40. Are there any questions or comments from the committee? I see none. I will now call the departmental summary. Capital Estimates 2021-2022, Infrastructure, \$292,766,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Does the committee agree that consideration of the Department of Infrastructure is completed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, committee. We will now move onto the Department of Justice. The committee has previously considered the activity summaries for the department. We will return to the departmental summary on page 50. Are there any questions or comments from the committee? I see none. I will now call the departmental summary. Capital Estimates 2021-2022, Justice, \$1,541,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Does the committee agree that consideration of the Department of Justice is completed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, committee. We will now move onto the Department of Lands. The committee has previously considered the activity summaries for the department. We will return to the departmental summary on page 58. Are there any questions or comments from the committee? I see none. I will now call the departmental summary. Capital Estimates 2021-2022, Lands, \$234,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Does the committee agree that consideration of the Department of Lands is completed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, committee. We will now move onto the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs. The committee has previously considered the activity summaries for the department. We will return to the departmental summary on page 61. Are there any questions or comments from the committee? I see none. I will now call the departmental summary. Capital Estimates 2021-2022, Municipal and Community Affairs, \$29,000,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, committee. Does the committee agree that consideration of the Municipal and Community Affairs is completed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, committee. We will now move onto the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. I will remind committee that the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is including in the capital estimates as an information item and the totals are not voteable. The committee has previously considered the activity summaries and will return to the corporation summary found at page 64. Are there any questions or comments from the committee? I see none. Does committee agree that consideration of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is complete?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, committee. Does the committee agree that this concludes consideration of Tabled Document 181-19(2), Capital Estimates 2021-2022?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Mr. Norn.

COMMITTEE MOTION 58-19(2):
CONCURRENCE MOTION – Tabled
DOCUMENT 181-19(2): CAPITAL ESTIMATES
2021-2022,
CARRIED

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Chair. I move that consideration of Tabled Document 181-19(2), Capital Estimates 2021-2022, be now concluded and that Tabled Document 181-19(2), Capital Estimates 2021-2022, be reported and recommended as ready for further consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. Marsi cho, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Norn. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those against? Abstentions? Motion carried.

---Carried

Tabled Document 181-19(2), Capital Estimates 2021-2022, will be reported as ready for consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. Mr. Norn, what is the will of the committee?

MR. NORN: Marsi, Mr. Chair. I move that the chair rise and report progress. Marsi cho.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): All those in favour? Against? Abstentions? Carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

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

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Madam Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 181-19(2), Capital Estimates 2021-2022, and would like to report progress with one motion carried and that consideration of Tabled Document 181-19(2), Capital Estimates 2021-2022, is concluded and that the House concur in those estimates and that an appropriation bill be based thereon, to be introduced without delay, and, Madam Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do I have a seconder? Member for Kam Lake. To the motion. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Item 22, third reading of bills. Minister of Justice.

Third Reading of Bills

BILL 17:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE CORRECTIONS ACT,
CARRIED

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Corrections Act, be read for the third time, and, Madam Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Question has been called, and the Minister has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): The Member for Hay River North, the Member for Great Slave, the Member for Kam Lake, the Member for Frame Lake, the Member for Deh Cho, the Member for Yellowknife North, the Member for Monfwi, the Member for Nahendeh, the Member for Sahtu, the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, the Member for Hay River South, the Member for Thebacha, the Member for Nunakput, the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, the Member for Yellowknife South, the Member for Range Lake, the Member for Yellowknife Centre.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. All those opposed, please stand. Abstentions, please stand. The results of the recorded vote: 17 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 17 has had third reading. Bill 18, Minister of Justice.

BILL 18:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE LEGAL PROFESSION
ACT,
CARRIED

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 18, An Act to Amend the Legal

Profession Act, be read for the third time, and, Madam Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Question has been called, and the Minister has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): The Member for Hay River North, the Member for Great Slave, the Member for Kam Lake, the Member for Frame Lake, the Member for Deh Cho, the Member for Yellowknife North, the Member for Monfwi, the Member for Nahendeh, the Member for Sahtu, the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, the Member for Hay River South, the Member for Thebacha, the Member for Nunakput, the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, the Member for Yellowknife South, the Member for Range Lake, the Member for Yellowknife Centre.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: All those opposed, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand. The results of the recorded vote: 17 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 18 has had third reading. Third reading of bills. Bill 19, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

BILL 19:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE STUDENT FINANCIAL
ASSISTANCE ACT,
CARRIED

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, be read for the third time, and, Madam Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Question has been called, and the Minister has asked for a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland):

The Member for Hay River North, the Member for Great Slave, the Member for Kam Lake, the Member for Frame Lake, the Member for Deh Cho, the Member for Yellowknife North, the Member for Monfwi, the Member for Nahendeh, the Member for Sahtu, the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, the Member for Hay River South, the Member for Thebacha, the Member for Nunakput, the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, the Member for Yellowknife South, the Member for Range Lake, the Member for Yellowknife Centre.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. All those opposed, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand. The results of the recorded vote: 17 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 19 has had third reading. Third reading of bills. Bill 21, Minister of Finance.

BILL 21:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 2, 2020-
2021,
CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Nahendeh, that Bill 21, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2020-2021, be read for the third time. Madam Speaker, I would request a recorded vote. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Monfwi.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Speaker. [Translation] This supplementary, we had a long discussion yesterday. Some supported it; some did not. I want to say a few words on this topic. Yesterday, there was an election going on in the USA, so some of them may not have listened to our proceedings yesterday. Madam Speaker, when we are here in this House as MLAs, the people are the ones who voted us in, and we, in turn, say whatever they want us to say. It's not my own words; it's my people's words. Once I leave this building, we talk to people, and we get feedback from people; we talk to the people who we represent. Some days, it's really difficult, how many times I have mentioned this. We have a lot of alcohol and drug problems, homelessness in all our communities, and we have talked about this so many times. They are the ones who are giving us this information. They want us to bring it up to this session here, and I bring those forward for them.

Madam Speaker, recently, we have been losing a lot of young people. They are passing on. Even last week, from my region, we lost a young lady. Even though those things are happening in our communities, we still have to deal with all the issues that we have to deal with here. Now, we have this important motion in front of us. I'm having a difficult time to support this motion. I am talking on behalf of the people who are not able to say anything in this House. It seems like we're creating a situation. We've hired all these people with all this money, and when we think about the amount of money we're going to spend for this department and look at home, where we have all these problems, it's really difficult. We are representing the people who are supporting us. Some days, it's really difficult to listen to what's happening here. The amount of money that we're spending, and our people are suffering. Once I leave this building, I go to a coffee shop. I would see people staggering around, and some of them will be asking me for money for coffee or a sandwich. I ask them, "Where are you staying?" or "Do you have a home?" They have no idea that we're meeting here, so a lot of times they are having difficulties. They have nowhere to go, and they say that, "I have no one to help me, so I'm on the street." I am numbing myself in this way. How many times have I come across people like that?

Madam Speaker, we have this bill in front of us. We had a long discussion yesterday. We did talk about this, and maybe a lot of people didn't hear what we had to say yesterday. [End of translation] [Microphone turned off] ...some of the things I said in my Tlicho language. I'm just going to summarize some of them. I simply cannot support this supplementary as it is. As you know, we had a deliberation last night, late into the night, on one specific item: the secretariat budget of \$8.277 million of new funding, new funding for employees of the secretariat. I have no other issues with the supplementary. On the other supplementary items and such, I have no issues, but it is very unfortunate that they're all lumped together. It's all bundled in one package. It should have been a separate item. This is a very controversial issue, but if the government of the day want us to approve one package, then that's what it is.

Madam Speaker, I've been talking about this for the last couple of weeks now. We need to invest into our communities. What is it that our communities need? I did speak in my language about the homeless people out there, homeless people who cannot speak in this House. That's why we're their voice here. I was elected to represent my people. It's not my voice. Once I walk out of here, I usually run into my constituents or other people from the North, and they question, "What are you guys doing? Why are you guys spending so many

millions on this so-called secretariat?" They may not use the word "secretariat," some of them, because they're having a hard time speaking English, but in the Tlicho language there is another form. They do not like the bureaucracy.

Madam Speaker, I would just like to reiterate that, due to the US election that was happening at the same time last night, throughout the night, we'd been deliberating this supplementary, a lot of people may have probably missed our broadcast here. I feel that it's very important that they know where we stand on this particular subject matter, on the supplementary, so I just want to reiterate what I said yesterday, just a couple of paragraphs.

Just think of the \$87 million over the next four years, what that could do for the people of the Northwest Territories. It could build 300 homes for the homeless who I referred to earlier. There are overcrowded Northerners throughout the Northwest Territories, especially in the most isolated communities. Some households have 15 to 20 people living in one- or two-bedroom houses. That's a real fact. It could construct three new addiction treatment centres plus six badly needed community health centres across the North. It is equal 100 classroom teachers employed over the next five years. It also amounts to cash value for those 3,000-plus struggling northern businesses to a tune of \$29,000 per company. Just imagine the economic boost of that. That's just the tip of the iceberg.

Like I said yesterday, as well, I could go on and on and on, but we don't have much time this evening to deal with this. I'm just going to wrap things up by saying that we are losing lives out there. I've touched on this, as well, in my language. Almost on a daily basis, a weekly basis, especially in my region. The past couple of weekends, we lost two young individuals back to back. That was very sad. That was very hard. It's very difficult to be standing here to speak to that. It's very emotional. We need to turn our focus to those in need throughout the Northwest Territories, not create another form of bureaucracy within GNWT. Let's start making a difference for our Northerners. We have lost far too many people, our people of the North. Let's not lose any more, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, for that reason alone, I cannot and will not support the current supplementary that is before us as presented, especially on the category of the COVID secretariat. Masi, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. To the motion. Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Speaker. I would like the residents of the Northwest

Territories, especially the elderly and the sick, that I do care for their health and well-being. The issue here is: are we doing prudent spending on behalf of the people so that we can save dollars that can be used towards the small communities in terms of buying ventilation equipment, buying all of the necessary items that are required for PPE for all the COVID-related issues. With Alberta travellers coming into our territory, it's a big concern because we are on the highway system, my community. I have four communities on the highway system. We are seeing lots of traffic, and we have seen all summer Alberta, British Columbia, and Quebec licence plates into our territory. I stated all this yesterday, and I just want to reiterate it today, that that shows that there are problems manning our border check stops. We are not doing a good job of that at all.

I think this COVID team has been in place since March. I spoke to it a length, too, stating that we have a workforce of close to 6,000 people, 6,000 employees within the Government of the Northwest Territories. I suggested many times to the Premier and Cabinet that we should have used people from our own workforce, which would have saved us having to pay for benefits and compensation for 150 new people. That would have been significant savings. The federal government has contributed \$24 million, 23.4, to the GNWT for COVID. I would like to call it a task force. It should have been called a task force, probably. I suggested that they use that, those federal dollars, for this task force and not have to touch the GNWT taxpayers' dollars. That can go to much-needed complements, as I mentioned at the start of my speech.

Also, I noted that it's recorded that the Finance Minister could not assure this House that we would get success, I mean the funding continuing for every successive year. There was no indication of that. It could be a one-time funding pot, but they are saying on that side of the House that of course the Prime Minister will throw money at it every chance he has. We do not know the future of the federal politics at this point, whether there is going to be a new election or whether they may change their tune. There could be some other emergency. This COVID is a serious, serious business, but we need to tighten up our actions, and we should have done it with this secretariat. We could have saved a lot of money. The GNWT, being the highest level of government in the Northwest Territories, has to show the people, the businesses, that we represent that we can take on and be prudent and fiscally responsible in our spending.

There are lots of news reports out there on social media about our isolation centres. That is another big catastrophe since day one. We are well into November. Since March, November now, nothing has improved with those isolation centres. There

are still lots of people walking, walking away from the centres, stories of people partying all night. They got free places to stay to party. That has not been fixed. We are finding that there are a lot of problems, still. We have got a team in place since March, and we have not made any headway. We keep saying, Cabinet keeps saying, that we are making headway, but I did not see anything.

We should have had all the residents who return, even from medical, who are in the isolation centres to get tested, not the rapid testing. I am not a big fan of an instant test because it's been shown to fail in some instances because, six days later, symptoms can appear. I am a fan of the lab testing that takes about five days, maybe less, but you can send it out to different labs if you looked around and found them. Then we could have had, we could have shortened isolation stay for many residents if we were to do that, but no, no, we don't want to do that. We want to show the people of the NWT that we've got money to play with.

When I first come into this Assembly here, we were already at a debt level. We need to thank the federal government for raising it from 1.3 to 1.9. It was mentioned yesterday, one forest fire in the summer will wipe out our debt level again, and we are in financial trouble. It's just the way the government spends. Cabinet spends on that side of the House without real consultation with Regular Members on this side of the House, who represent many of the residents of the Northwest Territories. Madam Speaker, having said that, I support all the other items on there. It's just the COVID secretariat that is stuck in there, so I have to vote against this bill. Mahsi.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. To the motion. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Speaker. I will not say too much beyond what some of my colleagues have already spoken about this motion. I will say, when this news first came up, the news reports in China last year about this terrible virus, COVID-19, I thought, "I hope it doesn't come this way." All of a sudden, you start hearing that kind of trickle starting to come through and the terrible sickness and illness. Again, every day, I was thinking, "I just hope it does not come this way," and sure enough, it did. It did make its way here. We started to hear businesses closed, businesses that had kept open for 200 years all of a sudden start closing their doors, that there is operations in place, businesses, like all kinds of, again, businesses are open during the World War II, like through the world wars, that, all of a sudden because of COVID, they are closed now. Things we've never seen in this generation, that none of us has ever experienced, and I kept thinking, "I hope it doesn't come this way." Sure enough, it did, and one of the cases hit my home

town. That was scary, but we got through that. When I visit my home town, if the weather is nice enough, I'll go and visit some of my lost loved ones. I go and visit my pops at the grave, and on the way out of the graveyard in Deninu Kue, there is a large area there of a previous pandemic from the flu and TB. There are some terrible, terrible scourges that hit our territory and our people really hard, and I hope none of this ever happens again. How do we navigate that?

In really thinking about this, again, I have spoken about this early on. When I first saw the documents that came out from the Cabinet side of things, I thought it was some sort of weird joke. I thought, "It had better not be April 1st." I looked at the date, and no, this is actually happening. Because, looking at this and at our responses, we're the only jurisdiction in the country that is doing this, that is creating a department to react to this. It has never been done. It's not done anywhere else. Other jurisdictions are aligning their resources to battle this through their different departments and doing it in that way. Is this best practice? No. Do I feel this is the right thing to do? No. No, I don't feel it is.

I mentioned this yesterday, and I won't spend too much more time speaking to this. I really believe in my heart that there is a better way to go, but not this way. Like I said, we're very thankful right now. Our response right now has been very good, and I'm hoping and I'm praying that we don't see any loss of life through this. I'm hoping we navigate this, and I have to respect all my colleagues' votes. We've been here just over a year, now. We all have our mandates, and we have to try to navigate through this. I really think this \$8.7 million will take a step back against some of our mandate items. I think there is a better way to do this, and so, again, I want to let everyone know that I will be speaking against this motion and voting against it. I do not support this part of the motion.

Again, like what my colleague from Deh Cho said, it's just the specific allocation for the COVID secretariat. This \$8.7 million is what I have an issue with. The rest, I'm okay with. With that, I have nothing else to say. Marsi cho.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. To the motion. Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, I'll repeat myself from what I said last night. As an Inuvialuit beneficiary living in my home town of Tuktoyaktuk, 17 miles away from Tuktoyaktuk is Kitegaryumiut. We lost 3,000 people in the pandemic in the 1920s. I think that, when COVID-19 first came out, we didn't know what we were doing. Everybody was in a panic. Everybody tried to do their best. Our government tried to do their best. Now, we have to do our best in regard to the safety

of the people of the Northwest Territories, and for me, the money, 8 million bucks, one life saved is worth it. I don't care about the money. I care about the safety; the safety of my people. You know as well as I do that our hamlets, our communities, tried to shut down the highway going into Tuktoyaktuk, into Inuvik. They had to try roadblocks and things like that. They were so worried about the pandemic coming because, growing up in Tuktoyaktuk, you hear stories about those days, about what happened. It's different. When you say "pandemic," or something like that, it scares people, especially our elders. That's the most important for me, is our elders and our youths.

You look back, and we have to try to get through this together as 19 Members. It's not the government. It's all our responsibility to get through this. We have to get through this pandemic. It's a new world in regard to this COVID-19 world, and it's the safety of our constituents that's our priority. For the COVID secretariat, I will be supporting it. I have all the respect in the world for every one of these Members in this House, Madam Speaker, and everybody has to make their own choice upon their own judgment. When I look at this, it's bigger than that. It's so big, we just hope it doesn't hit our communities. I will be in support of it. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. To the motion. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yesterday, I was not able to speak on this matter, so I will now. With respect to the budget, I'm in support of it. There are questions with the funds being spent on the COVID secretariat; however, we always hear people say, "How much is a life worth?" Well, I say, "Is the life of somebody who passes away from COVID worth more than somebody who is an addict, or vice versa?" Really, all lives are important, and in this instance, we have something in front of us that could have really caused devastation. We have addictions, which is devastating in itself, but we focused on this one. We're talking \$8 million up until the end of this fiscal year coming from the GNWT, but we moved so quickly on the secretariat; we moved quickly on COVID. Money was thrown at us from the federal government; we threw money in. What I would like to see is that we do the same thing with addictions. If we could move that fast on addictions, we can make a difference.

In Hay River, as well, we've had three or four young people pass away with respect to whether it was drug-related, or there is always something like that involved. Nobody wants to see anyone pass away, old or young, for any reason whatsoever. For me, I will support the motion. We can move money around. We can move it, but if somebody passes

away from COVID, what do we tell their family? "Well, we saved some money. We moved it to something else. Maybe we could have saved that life, but we will never know."

What we need to do is we have to look forward. Let's look and try to make an impact on fighting addictions and fighting homelessness. Those are the things that kill people. Like the Member for Monfwi said, he goes for coffee or goes downtown. It's the same thing in Hay River. When I get home, guys are there. They're waiting for me, and they're looking for coffee; they're looking for money, whatever. Or sometimes they just want to talk to you, as well. Like I think I've told the Minister of health is that, at the end of the day, if we don't get a day shelter for these guys, what I'm going to do is: I'm going to move all the furniture out of my office and turn it into a day shelter until we get one if that's what we have to do because it's not just this government that has to take responsibility. It's everybody. All the residents of the NWT have to participate in this, and they do, in some sense. A lot of people, they give food. A lot of people will provide shelter. A lot of people will go and pay for fuel bills for people. They will pay their power bills because they know they're down. I think that it's just not on this government to make change. It's everybody, and that's what I look for. I look for participation, and I look for people to help out. In Hay River, we have that. We still have people on the streets, and when I hear that they're sleeping under the stairs or something at the old town hall, that's not good. We have to change that.

The other thing that came up, as well, in discussions, and I talked to the Minister of the Power Corporation of that, as well, is the issue of areas and limiters. To me, here we are; we're spending this money. Yet, we have people out there that maybe owe us \$2 million or whatever. There's not a lot of them. I asked her, "Why don't we just find that money? We should try to find that within government and give those people a leg up and pay those bills for them because that amount of money means a lot to some people." Those types of things, and with limiters, that's the other thing, is why do we even? People go throughout the winter thinking that this might happen, hanging over their head day after day after day. Wake up not knowing if you're going to have power or not, so that's a problem.

The other thing, as well, is in Hay River where we have very limited public housing, what we're finding now is that people are actually moving in with people who are in housing. Of course, when that happens policies are getting broken and tenant agreements are being broken. Everybody's getting threatened to get thrown out of there, but they have no other option. What do we do? I would ask the Minister to consider making sure that if that has to

happen, somebody's fleeing an abusive situation, so they move in with somebody that's living in public housing for safety. Let them be there. People say, "It's not safe because there are too many in the house." I grew up with seven sisters, a brother, and then my mom and dad were there. We had a two-bedroom house, and I'm still standing here today. I think I turned out okay.

We're getting so carried away with policies and legislation and liability, and it just goes on and on where we can't really do anything and we can't help people. I don't know. I look at what we do, and it's frustrating because I can see answers out there. Coming from the private sector, I just like to go and do stuff and get it done. Again, when it comes to the secretariat, that money is there. We're going to vote on it. More likely it's going to pass, but at the same time, I would ask this government: let's get a plan together. An action plan, not a strategy, we need an action plan to combat addictions, combat homelessness, and the real matter that will save people's lives and make their lives better. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. To the motion. Member for Great Slave.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I don't have anything new to add really to what my colleagues here have been already saying. I care a lot about public safety. It's something I've always incorporated into my work, and I will still continue to do so. At a young age, I even took an oath to protect it. I hear and see the need in this territory, and do I think that this additional money that's going to be spent is going to improve the safety or protect us better from COVID? No, I don't. I am also often hit up for money to help people fill their fuel tanks or buy groceries for their children. I'm sure it's something everybody in this room also experiences on a regular basis. While it's hard to stand up and say that I don't support this because as a result, some of the initiatives I really believe in, like the policing initiative, I will be voting against them, as well. However, how it's presented, I can't in good faith vote now to increase government employment given the needs of our territory. As I said yesterday, a couple million dollars that's earmarked for a few managers' salaries and office space, not when I look around and see that people don't even have proper housing. I won't be supporting this supplementary. Thanks.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. To the motion. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I stand before you today to say I support this supplementary. I support this supplementary because the mayor of the town of Fort Smith, the

chief of the Salt River First Nation, and the president of the Fort Smith Metis Nation are all in support of this supplementary. They are in support of the secretariat. I was in contact with them as early as yesterday. Safety of individuals and a community and the Northwest Territories is extremely important. I think you have to look down South, and you see how things changed in the second wave. A lot of the Aboriginal communities were affected in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, BC, and across Canada. If one case got into the communities in the Northwest Territories and starts spreading, we are in major problems here. I think that the safety of all communities, regional centres, and the capital are important.

As a former Aboriginal leader for twelve years, and I've been in that Aboriginal arena for twelve years, and the one thing I learned from the leaders of the Aboriginal people is that they care about everybody, not only themselves. It is very humbling to be a leader of an Aboriginal group. I try to bring that here, and I'm very strong on the issues. I feel that I'm very strong to my convictions, and this is one of my convictions. I had decided this a long time ago, but I had to make sure that everybody was in favour of it from my constituency of Thebacha. For every person that I asked, whether they be younger or from the school or from a senior or to the church groups, they are all in favour of keeping our community safe. Therefore, I stand before you and I stand before everybody in this House with my conviction that I will be supporting this bill. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. To the motion. Does the Minister of Finance wish to conclude the debate? Member for Nahendeh.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. First and foremost, I appreciate all Members here speaking up and voicing their concerns and their opinions here. This is what our House is about: it's about working and hearing everybody's concerns. I'm going to speak about my concern that I had. I have staff that were from the Department of Lands and ENR that are working lots and lots of overtime. Other departments are in the same boat. When we talk about the safety of our individuals, we had people that were driving to borders, the Alberta border, again working 10, 12 hours, then coming back. I brought it to the Cabinet, and I said, "Look, we need to do something about this." I personally, I can speak for myself, I said, "We need to deal with this. We need to look at how we're going to combat this, how we're going to organize this and how we're going to do it."

Is it perfect? No, but we're working to improve it as each day goes on. We have conversations in Cabinet, we listen to our colleagues from the other side. There are some challenges out there. I'm not

going to deny that, but this is the reality. We're in a pandemic, and we need to make some hard decisions. We came up with this secretariat to help residents. We talk about the safety of Northerners. My colleague from Nunakput talks about 3,000 people who died from a pandemic previously. Am I happy with that? No, because that's where my kids' ancestry comes from. I do not want to look at any pandemic that's going to take people's lives away from them.

I struggle; I've been challenged with border control. In Nahendeh riding, we have two gates to stop people from coming in. There are people that bypass that. The Member from Deh Cho talked about people that came and went away. Yes, we hear about it. I deal with it daily. I work with my colleagues to try to get this addressed and try to fix. It is money well spent for people's lives, and that's what we've got to look at. It was a hard decision, lots of struggles for myself. I could probably say for everybody here when they're talking about it. It's about the residents of the Northwest Territories and how we're going to deal with it. I am going to stand up and support this, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. To the motion. Does the Minister of Finance wish to conclude the debate?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The total costs so far of the COVID-19 pandemic is \$175 million. The COVID secretariat is just one part of that. We have already received more than half of that, over \$92.5 million from the federal government. The federal government has been a good partner with this fight. Every province and territory is fighting this fight. The COVID secretariat is just one -- I'd say, it's quite a small part of what we're doing, Madam Speaker.

Whether we call it a secretariat or whether you call it a task force or whether you call it the COVID umbrella, it really doesn't matter. What matters is the work that they're doing. Right now, Madam Speaker, it is the primary response message that we have to implement the orders of the Chief Public Health Officer. The Chief Public Health Officer is the person in this territory who is best placed to model, to understand, to figure out the evolving nature of a disease that is sweeping across the world. She is the one that's at the front end at the front line of figuring out how to respond to something that no one has ever been asked to respond to before. The COVID secretariat is one small thing that we are doing here to help implement the orders that she's bringing out in the best interests of the health and safety of all the residents of the Northwest Territories.

Back in March, when it was a crisis, an emergency that everyone was having to respond to, that is when the work began. Madam Speaker, at that time, developed the response that included the isolation centres because we didn't want anyone coming back from away and elsewhere in Canada or internationally, even at the time, coming back and going into a small community where there aren't health centres, where there is overcrowding, where people have low health indicators. Those are all risk factors for COVID-19. No one is not alive to that. We're extremely alive to that, and that is exactly why we have the isolation centres; why we have the border restrictions; why we have the border patrols; why we have the patrols at the airports because we can't let this disease get into small communities or out into regions where it would potentially have devastating consequences.

And initially, as my colleague has just mentioned, Madam Speaker, it was individually department by department, staff person by staff person being asked to do things outside of what their job descriptions were in order to be able to be on the front lines in an urgent situation. That is not sustainable, Madam Speaker. Figuring out who was doing what, putting it all together, gathering it up, the Department of Finance did bring together the actual amounts that were spent in the first few months when all of this work, all of this same work was already happening as part of our response when we were keeping COVID-19 out of the territory. For a large part, we have had very few cases, Madam Speaker.

We put all of that together. We looked at those actual numbers, and those are the numbers that inform the cost of the COVID secretariat. The projections that we have here are based on the actual costs spread across all of the departments, only now, they are being brought together. Now, we can put it out on the Department of Finance website. Now, it is transparent. Now, I can, month by month, report exactly on what the costs are because it's all been brought together. Now, we don't have to take people away from the front-line work that they're doing in other departments because they have somewhere else where they are coordinated to do that work, where we figured out which positions needed to be filled that couldn't be double filled or filled by redeployments who were then off of their other jobs. We figured that out in a coordinated way, and that is what's happening under this COVID secretariat.

Is it a best practice? Well, Madam Speaker, I don't know that anyone knows the best practice just yet. That is exactly the challenge of governing is to figure out the best practice as quickly as possible in an urgent situation to make sure that people are safe. Madam Speaker, CBC noted that, on November 3rd, in Canada, there were 71 deaths

from COVID-19, yesterday. When we were debating this, there were 71 deaths in Canada from COVID-19. A week ago, there were 362 cases in Indigenous communities in Canada. This week, it's at 500. Again, reported on CBC. Madam Speaker, I am sad for my Canadian colleagues and friends and neighbours, but I am also thankful that we are not facing that level of pandemic here in the territories. Let's be honest, Madam Speaker. Some of that's just luck, but some of it is due to the response that we've had since day one, and it's a response that we want to continue.

Madam Speaker, \$8.7 million is a number that's been put out there. What that is is the projected cost of just under \$32 million to the end of the fiscal year, taking away what right now is the amount of federal funding that we've received that we're able to put towards a secretariat, leaves just over \$8 million which would be GNWT funded. That money is not exclusively for employees. That money is meant to perform all of these different functions from border patrols to airport monitoring to the isolation centres to various contacting functions, NWT protect, as well as the communications and some policy development because we are not done in evolving our response. Just as the disease is evolving, of course, the response has to evolve.

As was made plain very much yesterday, there must be things that we do all the time to make the response better, to make it more tailored, and hopefully to reduce the costs that we're seeing here, to change the way that people are being asked to respond, to change the communities where people might be able to self-isolate, to look at the different options for self-isolation, to look at the costs of it. We can't do that on the sides of our desk. We need someone to look at that and actually try to come up with a best practice. That's part of what's included in that \$8 million, Madam Speaker. Will we go out and try to get more money from the federal government? of course. How many times we've answered questions on every one of our departments that we are constantly engaging. COVID-19 has been an opportunity. There have been weekly calls between many of the departments and federal ministers and FPT. The federal provincial territorial ministers across Canada are all getting together to share our ideas, to share our best practices because everyone is trying to figure out what to do.

I can't see into the future, Madam Speaker. If I could, I would know when and where the disease might arrive, but I can't. I would know, perhaps, how the pandemic would unfold, but I don't. Madam Speaker, what we can do is continue to bring about the implementation of the orders that our Chief Public Health Officer is working constantly, along with her colleagues from all of Canada, to help us reduce the risk of this disease here within the

territory. We're going to continue to do that, Madam Speaker. We're going to continue to do that in a way that is responsible. We're going to continue to do it in a way that is transparent. We're going to continue to report on those costs. We're going to continue to report when there can be a change, if we can, in fact, save money because of an evolution in the way we are responding.

Madam Speaker, the materials that are before you today in this supplementary that include that COVID secretariat includes so many other things. While we might want to parse out and say, "It's the COVID secretariat that's at issue," the simple fact is that, at this point, it's not just the COVID secretariat. We have to respond to the economic crisis that's been created as a result. We have to respond to the educational crisis that's been created as a result. Those things are also in the supplementary appropriation. The safe restart for the school funding, some of that is here, Madam Speaker; school contributions, contributions to student financial assistance is here; airline supports are in here for the GRIT program for ITI is here; regional relief for local businesses, that's all here, Madam Speaker. Sports organizations for youth, that is here, too. It is more than just the COVID secretariat. It is about now becoming a social, economic response that we have to have in addition to the health response that we've had to have.

Madam Speaker, I will also be voting, not surprisingly, in support of this supplementary because I know, Madam Speaker, that these numbers have been costed out carefully. I know that we are going to do our best, as I've said, to continue to be transparent about them, to do even better with our communications of them. While not everybody might support the measures, and they are hard and they are not easy for anyone to follow, it's not pleasant. The pandemic is causing tremendous strain on everyone.

Madam Speaker, as we've gone out, engaged and explained, explained what the secretariat thing is, the work that it's doing that it is actually the work that is implemented in the orders that have kept us safe, support has grown. Support has grown among Indigenous governments and communities and businesses. Not everyone will support it, Madam Speaker, but that is not the job of governing. The job of governing is to try to do your best; to try to do your best to maintain the health and the safety of the people of the Northwest Territories; to ensure the stability of the Northwest Territories; to ensure the stability, as much as possible, of our response to COVID-19, so that we can do our best to continue to keep it at bay. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. The Minister has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland):

The Member for Yellowknife South, the Member for Range Lake, the Member for Yellowknife Centre, the Member for Kam Lake, the Member for Frame Lake, the Member for Yellowknife North, the Member for Nahendeh, the Member for Sahtu, the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, the Member for Hay River North, the Member for Hay River South, the Member for Thebacha, the Member for Nunakput.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. All those opposed, please stand.

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland):

The Member for Great Slave, the Member for Deh Cho, the Member for Monfwi, the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: All those abstaining, please stand. The results of the recorded vote: 13 in favour, four opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 21 has had third reading. Third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Orders of the day for Thursday, November 5, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
 - Question 358-19(2), Long-Term Care Facility
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions

12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions
 - Motion 22-19(2), Appointment of Law Clerk
 - Motion 23-19(2), Appointment of Sole Adjudicators
 - Motion 24-19(2), Changes to Committees Membership
 - Motion 25-19(2), Extended Adjournment of the House to February 3, 2021
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Committee Report 6-19(2), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on Remote Sitings
 - Minister's Statement 77-19(2), National Housing Co-Investment Fund
 - Tabled Document 165-19(2), Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 1-19(2): Report on Long-Term Post-Pandemic Recovery - Recommendations to the GNWT
 - Tabled Document 166-19(2), Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 2-19(2): Report on Long-Term Post-Pandemic Recovery - Recommendations to the GNWT
 - Tabled Document 167-19(2), Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 3-19(2): Report on Long-Term Post-Pandemic Recovery - Recommendations to the GNWT
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

DEPUTY SPEAKER: This House stands adjourned until Thursday, November 5, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:10 p.m.