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

**HANSARD**

**Wednesday, June 10, 2020**

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**The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

## Members of the Legislative Assembly

### Speaker

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

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(Deh Cho)

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(Kam Lake)

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(Sahtu)  
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*Minister responsible for Homelessness*

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(Nunakput)

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

**Mr. Jackson Lafferty**  
(Monfwi)

**Ms. Frieda Martselos**  
(Thebacha)

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(Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh)

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(Frame Lake)

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(Inuvik Twin Lakes)

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(Hay River North)  
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**Hon. Diane Thom**  
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*Minister responsible for the Status of Women*  
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*Minister responsible for Seniors*  
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**Hon. Caroline Wawzonek**  
(Yellowknife South)  
*Minister of Finance*  
*Minister of Justice*

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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Wednesday, June 10, 2020****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:33 p.m.

**Prayer**

---Prayer

**SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr):** Members, I have received two letters from the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, the Honourable Margaret Thom.

**Assent to Bills**

The first, dated June 10, 2020, reads as follows:

Dear Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise that I assent to the following bills:

- Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act; and
- Bill 7, Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), 2020–2021.

The second letter, also dated June 10, 2020, reads as follows:

Dear Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise that I recommend to the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, the passage of:

- Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2020–2021

during the second session of the 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly.

Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Health and Social Services.

**Ministers' Statements**

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 53-19(2):  
COVID-19 TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

**HON. DIANE THOM:** Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 has affected all areas of social and economic activity in the Northwest Territories and around the world. As the pandemic has evolved and jurisdictions have been able to manage its spread, all governments

are looking at the public health measures that have been put in place and are continuing to adjust them. One area of significant interest to our government and to all the people and the communities in the Northwest Territories is travel. Due to the restrictions the Chief Public Health Officer had placed on travel early on, we have been fortunate in the territory to have only seen five cases of COVID so far.

While our strategy of restricting travel has clearly been a success when it comes to protecting public health, we have to recognize that it is a serious step and there are some significant legal limits and considerations that need to be respected. One of those legal limits is the requirement to respect the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees on freedom of mobility. The charter gives all Canadians the right to travel freely throughout Canada, and the Government of the Northwest Territories does not have the legal authority to override that. Although this means that our government cannot close the borders to Canadian residents, it does not prevent us from placing restrictions and conditions on travel by people once they are in the Northwest Territories.

This is what we have done under the public health order issued by the Chief Public Health Officer. Under the current orders, all travelers entering the NWT are greeted at a checkpoint by a border officer. The border officer collects their information, and if they do not meet an identified exemption, informs them of the NWT's public health travel restrictions, including the requirement for anybody entering to self-isolate for 14 days. Travellers have the opportunity to voluntarily turn around. If they choose not to, they are informed that they must seek an exceptional circumstances exemption and immediately self-isolate if they wish to proceed further in the Northwest Territories.

This is a shift in how the current order was being implemented. Mr. Speaker, before May 29, border officials asked people to turn around and return to their destination if they did not fit an existing exemption in order to meet our objectives. Following legal developments in southern Canada challenging similar actions in Newfoundland and Labrador, we realized we needed to take steps to more closely align implementation of our order with

the mobility provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. When I, or the Premier, have spoken about travel restrictions, we have spoken about different aspects of the same order. The bottom line is that our government cannot prevent people from entering into the Northwest Territories, but we can restrict and prohibit their movements once they are in the Northwest Territories.

Travel restrictions are a legitimate and necessary measure to help slow the spread of COVID-19 and mitigate its impact on Northwest Territories residents, communities, and the healthcare system. We will continue to maintain travel restrictions so long as they are necessary to protect our residents. We will continue the requirement for people to self-isolate in one of the four regional self-isolation communities, if they have entered from outside the territory. Our plan is to continue to cover the costs for people who need to access one of our self-isolation centres for Northwest Territories residents, but we will be asking non-Northwest Territories residents to cover the cost of their stay themselves.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that our public health measures have been adjusted to meet the realities on the ground and the threat of the pandemic challenges. We will review our measures and adjust them to reflect the current situation. We will also continue to strive to make sure our orders are in line with the necessary legal requirements and that the way we describe them are clear and accurate. COVID-19 is a dynamic situation, and how we have responded has changed. It will continue to change, Mr. Speaker, and so will the way we describe our response publicly. We recognize that this can be confusing for people, but we commit to doing a better job to explain those changes as soon as we make them, and speak about them as clearly and directly as possible.

We have two different changes coming this Friday, Mr. Speaker. One change is to the travel restrictions that I have been speaking about this afternoon. As I have said, these changes will line up better with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and will more clearly address leisure travel within the territory. The second change will be the implementation of phase 2 of relaxing restrictions under the Emerging Wisely plan. I know that all Members and all residents of the Northwest Territories are looking forward to phase 2. We will be briefing Members on phase 2 tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, and making a public announcement on Friday afternoon. While we are able to start revising our public health measures as the pandemic evolves, I want to remind all residents that COVID-19 is not over and we must still be cautious and follow the direction and guidance issued by our Chief Public Health Officer to keep our territory safe. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 54-19(2):  
THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT  
ORGANIZATION AND COMMUNITY AND  
INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT ON COVID-19  
RESPONSE

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic is a global crisis on a level the world has not seen in generations. Taking action to slow its spread and protect public health has required leadership from all levels of government. Today, I would like to highlight the work that has been done by the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs and the Emergency Management Organization in response to COVID-19. The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, or MACA, has the mandated responsibility for public safety within the Northwest Territories. To accomplish this, MACA houses the Emergency Management Organization, which provides guidance and coordination for our government and our partners to respond to territorial emergencies.

Each government department and external agency continues to be responsible for its own operations and decisions, but by having members of each department attend the meetings, the Emergency Management Organization provides a forum for discussing what they are doing and making sure that their plans align in a coordinated manner. The Emergency Management Organization, or EMO, is also responsible for making sure that all members have good, timely information about the full scope of the emergency response and for identifying potential gaps or the need for additional resources.

Typically, the focus for the EMO would be emergencies like floods or fires that only affect a portion of the Northwest Territories and are over relatively quickly. The COVID-19 pandemic is different in that it has affected everybody in the territory, has gone on for many months, and is projected to last for some time. This has required the EMO to take on additional tasks and responsibilities that are unique to this pandemic. Specifically, the EMO has established and maintained all isolation centres in the four regional centres: Yellowknife, Inuvik, Hay River, and Fort Smith. In addition, EMO is supporting checkpoints at airports and highways to keep track of who is entering the territory and make sure they know about our public health requirements.

The EMO also supports the 811 Support Line. Residents can call this one, easy number and select one of three options: general information on COVID-19 in the Northwest Territories; Protect NWT to raise issues of compliance for the

enforcement task force; and the third is to inquire about available services and support in the communities. EMO operators answer the calls on community supports. The EMO is also working to obtain and distribute personal protective equipment for non-medical essential workers, non-government organizations, community governments, and Indigenous governments. Community and Indigenous governments have supported these efforts by completing needs assessments to identify their personal protective equipment needs.

Mr. Speaker, community and Indigenous governments have also been affected by COVID-19 and have needed to adjust their operations and how they serve their residents. Since mid-March, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs has worked with senior administration officers and band managers to identify and monitor impacts to communities as a result of COVID-19, share information, update community emergency plans, and ensure continuity of emergency and essential services. These have included practical challenges such as holding council meetings remotely and making the required changes to bylaws to do so and helping community governments understand how the Chief Public Health Officer's orders affect them. As well, I have held weekly virtual town hall meetings with community and Indigenous government leaders since the beginning of the pandemic to provide a forum to hear and answer their concerns. Other Ministers and GNWT officials have also joined me at these meetings to answer questions that leaders have had about specific topics. Our government is extremely grateful for the support municipal and Indigenous governments have provided residents since the beginning of this pandemic. These governments are doing all they can to assist residents, and we would not be where we are without their support.

I would also like to say "thank you" to all the staff from the various departments who are involved with the EMO; all those who have voluntarily redeployed from other departments and agencies to support the response efforts; regional MACA staff who are continuing their direct engagement with communities; our management team who have worked non-stop since this began; and all those supporting the EMO and health efforts. Only by working together to identify and address gaps in our plans have we been able to keep this pandemic at bay and protect the residents of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, we have faced many emergencies in the past, but none have measured in comparison to COVID-19. This pandemic is not over, but by each of us doing our part to abide by the Chief Public Health Officer's orders and all stakeholders working together through the Emergency Management Organization, we will be better prepared as we plan

for a potential second wave in the fall. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

## Members' Statements

### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON RACISM

**MR. NORN:** Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Today, I chose to wear my moccasins to feel a little closer to the ground for what I'm about to say. Yesterday, I listened to a few of my colleagues talk about police brutality, racism, and racial inequalities that people are still experiencing and are feeling out there. The key word out there is "feeling." During session yesterday, somebody sent me a photo of my daughter, and I'm looking at it now. She looks so beautiful. Sine, my youngest daughter, taking part in a march against racism yesterday here in town. I felt incredibly proud. I talked to her a bit about it afterwards, and I could have shared some stories that I've experienced. I could have told her some of the racist notes I used to get in my locker as a Mountie. I could have shared some stories of me being followed around and being asked, "Are you going to buy something?" in a store in Lethbridge by store staff, being hovered over. I could have shared some stories about saying, "We don't necessarily need Aboriginal people in your job," in a boardroom not too long ago in a mining boardroom. I could share those stories with her, but I'm not.

I think that it is important, Mr. Speaker, that I want to teach togetherness and love above all else to my daughter. I asked her, "Why did you walk there?" I want to know what she felt. She said, "I walked it for my eldest sisters, because they still experience racism in the classroom." That really struck home. I felt a lump in my throat, but I'm glad we're teaching them the right way. I want to focus on a positive. I didn't want to share those negative stories with her because I want those stories to die with me. That's it. Move on, and we'll focus on the positives.

Mr. Speaker, we're now in the year 2020, not 1492, not 1867, not 1968, so why are we still feeling this way? Why are people still experiencing hatred and ill-will? I always turn to what the elders taught us and what my great-grandparents taught me, and I mentioned it in a social media post last week: they taught me to always be respectful, to listen, and they directed this at me specifically, they said, "Speak slowly. You speak too fast, my boy." Never laugh at people. You really think about that. Elders have a way of speaking to you, and it doesn't click until maybe 30 years down the road. It's important that we get that message across, what the elders

taught us, and to pass it on to our children. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to finish my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

**MR. NORN:** Marsi, Mr. Speaker. Marsi cho, colleagues. Through all this, how does this all tie in with what we're doing here? Again, we need to learn from this. In this House, within the GNWT, for me, I question myself, "Why are we still experiencing high unemployment rates in our small communities across the territories, low graduation rates, disproportionately high incarceration rates? How do we get better at this?"

I look at the history. You look at the dark ages; you had the renaissance. People fought through the way. They opened their minds. I think it's still doable. We just need to fight through that and change some of our policies. I could probably go on about some of the struggles that we are still having, but I'm going to focus a little bit on our Affirmative Action Policy. With that, I will have some questions for the Minister of Finance during oral questions. Marsi cho.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SALT RIVER FIRST NATION CLAIM IMPLEMENTATION

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On June 22, 2002, the Salt River First Nation treaty land entitlement claim was signed by several signatories, which includes both the Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories. The Salt River land entitlement claim was signed 18 years ago; yet its full implementation remains undone. This is not okay, Mr. Speaker. In fact, it is unacceptable. This is clearly an outstanding matter that the people of Salt River and Fort Smith have been waiting to see fully implemented after nearly two decades of constant delays, excuses, and trilateral negotiations that amount to nothing.

As former Salt River chief, I can attest personally to these roadblocks because I had to deal with them for 12 years while in leadership there. Salt River has faced endless roadblocks in implementing provisions of their agreement, which has strained good faith negotiations between Salt River and the Crown and has halted advances on infrastructure, housing, wellness, and other potential services on reserve lands. For example, the stalling of this claim has prevented Salt River from developing basic and critical infrastructure, such as water and sewer and filtration, among others. This means

that, despite Salt River being shovel-ready to build critical infrastructure, they aren't able to because the federal and territorial governments have stopped it from happening.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, since the territorial government is an equal signatory to the claim, they have the judiciary responsibility to carry out this claim in a timely manner, in good faith, and to push the federal government to do the same. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, listed number one on the top of the 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly's list of 22 priorities is "settle and implement treaty, land, resources, and self-government agreements." That is also re-affirmed in the 2019-2023 mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories. Thus, we in this 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly have a mandate to implement the several outstanding Indigenous land entitlement claims and other self-government agreements that have been ongoing in the NWT for many, many years. I will have questions for the Premier later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CLAW-BACK OF INCOME ASSISTANCE FROM INUVIALUIT CLAIMANTS

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my understanding, Mr. Speaker, that, prior to September 2007, the Income Assistance regulations specifically exempted the value of any payments received by the Inuvialuit Final Agreement beneficiaries from being clawed back to those who are also on income support as clients. When this change happened, payments to beneficiaries of the land claim agreements were suddenly reclassified as unearned income. According to regulations at the time, an unearned income over \$1,200 a year would be clawed back.

I spoke in this House against this in June 2008, Mr. Speaker. I pointed out that clients who receive dividend cheques from the community corporation can easily go over the \$1,200 limit if they receive the GST rebate, the federal Child Tax Benefit, and small gifts from relatives. I argued that this change in regulations does not keep in spirit of the intent of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement. The government specifically exempts payments to the Inuvialuit from taxation by level of government. Although the government might argue that, technically, income support clawbacks are not taxes, they have the same impact as taxes, Mr. Speaker, for those clients who are affected.

I also argued the benefits that the Inuvialuit receive under the land claim are a result of traditional rights and the final agreement negotiated in good faith with the Government of Canada. They cannot be



put in the same category as gifts and federal programs that Canadians receive, which can be stopped at any time. I understand that the GNWT has fixed that problem, but now I see that, according to Section 20(4) of the Income Assistance regulations, "money, or the value of goods, in excess of \$500 per year, received by a person under a self-government agreement, a land claims agreement, or an impact benefits agreement," will be classified as unearned income and contribute to the \$1,200 cap of unearned income.

Mr. Speaker, our low-income residents need the breaks that they can during this COVID-19 crisis and beyond. Why aren't we trying to get them back on their feet? The GNWT exempts residential school compensation from unearned income; they should do the same for these claims and beneficiaries. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
CHIEF JIMMY BRUNEAU SCHOOL  
REPLACEMENT

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] In Edzo, the Chief Jimmy Bruneau School, about 50 years ago, I was in the Chief Jimmy Bruneau School. It has been quite some time. Fifty years ago, I was at the Chief Jimmy Bruneau School. The last time they did renovations was 25 years ago. The people from the community of Behchoko want a new school to be built. Even the chiefs are asking for a new school to be built. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk about this. [Translation ends]

When the government honours a community by building a new school, the students also feel honoured. They have a greater interest in attending classes, achieving higher education. Mr. Speaker, students learn better, are healthier and happier, and are more likely to participate in extracurricular activities when the school they attend is modern, attractive, and up-to-date.

Chief Jimmy Bruneau School in Edzo is 50 years old. That's half a century, Mr. Speaker. When it was built, NASA's first moon landing was still making the headlines. Seriously, Mr. Speaker, Chief Jimmy Bruneau School is one of the oldest schools in our territory. The department of education has no option but to invest significant capital dollars into our school. The question is: will the money be used to give us a brand new school that generally serves the needs of our Tlicho students, a school that students are proud to attend, or will the department

try to revive the existing worn-out school by patching it up yet again, hoping for the best?

Mr. Speaker, Chief Jimmy Bruneau School in Edzo is five years older than J.H. Sissons School in Yellowknife, and J.H. Sissons School is currently in the process of being replaced with a brand new school. The students and parents in my constituency have a strong message for the Minister of education. They do not want their school to be patched up yet again. That was already done back in 1995, 25 years ago, Mr. Speaker. They want a brand new school, which the students need and deserve.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister and I already met with the Tlicho Chief's Executive Council, and their message was crystal clear: they want a brand new school. Community residents are also demanding a brand new school. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of Education at the appropriate time. Masi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
CONGRATULATIONS TO 2020 GRADUATES

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, my community is celebrating the achievement of the 2020 graduating class of East Three Secondary School by holding an outdoor ceremony and a public parade celebration. These students have had to complete their studies in a way that none of us have ever done or imagined. I would like to take this opportunity to first congratulate all of them on their graduation today and acknowledge all the hard work that they have put in to get where they are today. I'd also like to acknowledge their parents, guardians, and other family members, community members, educators who supported these East Three graduates today. They all have managed to be celebrating their graduation today. They have overcome challenges that were thrown at them with no face-to-face classes and only using technology to communicate with their instructors. I would say life has prepared them for this challenge.

Many of us have not been born into this world of technology and social media and are struggling, but they have overcome this and achieved their goal by graduating today. Congratulations to the East Three secondary class of 2020 on your accomplishments.

I would also like to take this time to congratulate all those students from my community who have also completed their post-secondary studies this year with all the challenges they had to overcome to complete. I congratulate all of those students who are currently in and finished their year, the ones

who have graduated. They're all going home now. I just want to make sure that they're well appreciated. I want to celebrate with them today, but I'm here. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ADDICTIONS AMID COVID-19 PANDEMIC

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Today, I would like to highlight the excessive use of alcohol and drugs since the onset of the coronavirus outbreak. This period of time, and the government's need to assist residents to prepare for self-isolation measures, brought huge sums of money into the hands of many residents. This period of time also brought a lot of idle time as many working class residents were off work and at home, bringing the whole of the Northwest Territories to a standstill.

Mr. Speaker, I nor anyone else can dictate what residents should or should not do with their time and money. Unfortunately, many chose to turn to the bottle and the assortment of drugs available to them. There are reports that the RCMP and health centre staff were run ragged during this period, all related to excessive alcohol and drug use. We are not out of the woods yet in relation to this virus as there may be a second and possibly a third wave.

Mr. Speaker, I can't pinpoint the reasons where all this excessive alcohol and drug use amongst the people of the Northwest Territories. I am almost certain many in our health care system can. The leaders in my riding have expressed concerns with the ongoing problems with alcohol and drugs. They see the GNWT having no regard to strict restrictions on alcohol sales and were quite taken aback with the dial-a-bottle program. Therein lies a major contributor to the alcohol and drug problems faced by many residents of the Northwest Territories and especially our Indigenous communities. I would also like to note that the many residents who do not use alcohol and drugs, lead a healthy lifestyle, are equally affected by this dilemma. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. Members' statements. Member for Frame Lake.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ENFORCEABLE BENEFITS FROM RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. Members of the last Assembly and the public spent a considerable amount of time reviewing and improving proposed legislative changes to increase benefit retention from resource development. This

work was long delayed and meant to start to fulfill the promise of devolution.

Amendments were also made to the oil and gas legislation to flip the secrecy onus, to make everything public unless there is a good reason not to. We are still waiting to have this new approach come into force. On the mining side, there is the potential for benefit agreements for Indigenous governments before a property can go into production, and possibly even the public may be assured of some benefits. The difficulty is that the Minister along with Cabinet have total and absolute discretion over whether any of this will happen, and this may be done on a case-by-case basis. Those holes are big enough to drive entire B-Train tanker trucks through as to whether Northerners can anticipate and realize enforceable benefits.

A recent May 1 Supreme Court of the Northwest Territories decision on the enforceability and relationship of community investment plans to regulatory requirements highlights how poorly our resources are actually managed in terms of benefit retention. The judge ruled that the secrecy of the oil and gas benefit plan system is the law. Community investment plans are separate from the benefit plans and cannot be enforced by the territorial government, even if there was the will to do so. There is no public review process for benefit agreements between the GNWT and oil and gas companies, and approval rests with the Minister alone. Although benefit agreements or plans may be required for mineral exploration and development through the Mineral Rights Act, all of this is again at the complete discretion of the Minister and Cabinet.

I will have questions later today for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment on what was learned as a result of the Acho Dene Koe First Nation court case and when the promises of devolution, including enforceable benefits for NWT residents, will be finally delivered and brought into force. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ACCESS TO EDUCATION

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Mr. Speaker, our schools don't only provide traditional learning opportunities like reading and writing. Schools are where children learn to interact, and where many children depend on for food and emotional support. COVID-19 has shown us that education of our northern youth is fragile and that access to education is not equitable. When I talk about equitable access, I am talking about access to the physical resources like hardware, software, Internet, and phones needed to

access and communicate with schools. However, I am also talking about the capacity of the child's home to support learning, such as the ability to navigate apps, to stay on top of school work, and to maintain a work-school life balance.

NWT schools closed their doors in mid-March, and since then, NWT parents have struggled to balance childcare, teaching their children, full-time jobs, and self-care. Some parents have had the capacity and resources to prioritize school. Some have had to accept that working full-time and home schooling is not a reality that they can achieve. Still others, have had no access at all. We have heard stories of no interaction between parents, students, and teachers. Even here in Yellowknife, I have spoken with people who cannot afford Internet, and do not have access to the hardware required for virtual learning.

Although school boards have created paper-based learning packages, many parents use pay-as-you-go cellphones, making the packages difficult to reach. Other parents still are confronting their own unique challenges, making it difficult to lead their children through homeschooling. I learned from some educators that the combination of access and capacity have resulted in one school saying, roughly, a one-third participation in school assignments.

Mr. Speaker, I do not share this out of judgment. I feel we just need to honestly understand where we are before we can talk about where we want to be and what we need to get there. We have closed schools, relying on an expectation that all children have equitable access to education, yet we also know that we are in an infrastructure deficit that is inhibiting the quality of access. Sadly, our socio-economic disparities are such that this is disproportionately affecting our lower income families to a greater degree. Our schools are the foundation of equitable access to education. Learning fuels pride, resilience and social connection. We always tell our children to prioritize their education because no one can take it away, yet here we are, Mr. Speaker. Without schools, our equitable access to learning supports creates barriers that may be insurmountable by some.

I believe the GNWT is going to need to take extraordinary steps to ensure that the 2020-2021 school year does not become the year that drives a further wedge between our privileged and underprivileged students. I look forward to hearing from the Minister of education about the work his department is doing to overcome the challenge of inequitable access to education supports. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
COMMUNICATIONS WITHIN NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Due to COVID-19, we in this House and in government have gained an audience, many paying attention to us for the first time in their lives. This is an opportunity to educate people on our processes and work to improve them. As an example, yesterday, we passed Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditure) 2020-2021, and today, we've just received assent from our Commissioner. Admittedly, Mr. Speaker, when Bill 7 came up on the order paper, I had to double check what it was. That was us passing a billion dollar budget, and for the first time in this House, it received unanimous consent. In years, that has not occurred, Mr. Speaker. I think to the average person watching, they didn't notice that happen.

Mr. Speaker, there are many things we can do to just simply change our processes to make them more accessible. The vast majority of my meetings are done in camera, another one of these terms originating from England that means "in the room" or "confidential or private." I think most of us understand what in camera means, but why don't we simply just call it confidential? This is a problem because it requires us as Members to know things or to pretend we don't know other things, and it creates this cognitive dissonance. I think it is even worse on the Cabinet side, where Ministers are unsure what they know, what they're supposed to know, and communicating this at times can become very difficult. I, myself, have information I know and have been trying to get to a constituent for a number of months but have yet to get it confirmed in a public manner.

I don't think there is anything nefarious going on in the lack of transparency. Often, as government, we just do things simply because that's the way it always has been done, but I think, Mr. Speaker, that it is time that we take a deep look at our processes and how to make them more accessible and transparent to the public. Of course, government needs to operate behind closed doors at times. We deal with legal advice. We deal with very personal health information. We conduct tough negotiations and we hold information that, if released the wrong way, can have wide-reaching consequences. I'm not presuming we get rid of all confidential meetings, but I am asking that all of us in this House, before we do anything, ask: can this action be made public and accessible?

Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend much of the work our comm staff do in making information more accessible and converting documents to plain language, but I ask myself: perhaps we could just operate in plain language in the first place. Mr. Speaker, I am seeking unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Consensus government is a model that has many strict rules of how our information can flow, and often our own processes are fighting against our need to be transparent. I will have questions for the Honourable Premier about how we can change some of the institutional barriers that limit us from communicating in a straightforward and timely way. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. Member for Thebacha.

### Oral Questions

#### QUESTION 314-19(2): SALT RIVER FIRST NATION CLAIM IMPLEMENTATION

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Government of the Northwest Territories is a signatory to the Salt River land entitlement claim, and thus has a vital role in implementation. Can the Premier explain why the implementation of this claim has not been fully implemented yet, despite being signed 18 years ago? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Government of the Northwest Territories is not a party to the Salt River treaty settlement agreement. It's a party to Schedule B. The agreement is between the federal government and Salt River, but Schedule B, which is attached to the agreement, addresses the transfer of Commissioner's lands to Canada. It also talks about the Appendix C as regarding the programs and services that you will receive on the reserve. A trilateral working group has been formed to undertake the discussions pursuant to the terms of reference that have been agreed upon by Canada, the GNWT, and the Salt River First Nation. We worked extensively with the Salt River First Nation and Canada to implement the provisions of Appendix C to Schedule B, and we will continue to do so. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** I don't think that is correct, but I will verify it for the next sitting. The Government of the Northwest Territories has equal representation at the trilateral table to ensure that the Salt River claim is implemented. Getting stuck on words of intent for 18 years is completely unacceptable. Will the Premier commit that her government will take proper measures to stop further delay in the Salt River claim implementation for reasons like this?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Again, to my knowledge, the government isn't a party to the land entitlement claim because it's a reserve. We don't have authority on that agreement, but we do have the appendixes. Appendix A, which is talking about the land, is actually done, in my understanding. It's Appendix C that is about programs and services.

We're more than willing to work with Salt River on this. I think the MLA would know that, when I was the Minister of housing in the last Assembly, for many years, housing had not been provided on that reserve, and I stood up and said, "We need to provide services to that reserve." That carries through with my commitments as Premier. I recognize that those residents are residents of the NWT, and we will do what we can to provide them with the same quality of services that we provide to all residents.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Will the Premier commit that this government will stop dragging its feet and begin to work immediately with the federal government to complete the implementation of the Salt River claim within the life of this government?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Absolutely. The land claims for all of the Indigenous governments are critical, and Salt River is no different than any other one. We have a trilateral working group. They have met twice already since the beginning of this term, and the official steering committee has met even more regularly. They are meeting regularly already. If the Salt River First Nation is interested in advancing the treaty settlement agreement with Canada, it might be time that we want to sit down and talk about other strategic approaches to working with the federal government. We're open to working with the Salt River, they are our people, and making sure that Canada does sign off on this as soon as possible.

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

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Reserves across Canada are always talking about the colour of the water on reserves. In Salt River, we have no developed lots to build infrastructure on. Can the Premier ask the Prime Minister in one of their weekly talks to implement the shovel-ready project of the Salt River First Nation to ensure the

reserve actually has water and sewer for the development of these surveyed lots? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** This is critical. I mean, it's too bad COVID-19 hit, because people need to go into the communities and see how people are living. The Regular Member, while she was a chief, did take me to the reserve and showed me some of the issues that they were seeing, and I advocate that, as soon as possible, all Members do that. Absolutely. I've already written a letter of support to the Salt River First Nation when they put in the proposals for these shovel-ready projects, so that is a commitment that I've already done and will carry forward. However, I can't commit to bringing it to the weekly meetings with the Prime Minister because those weekly meetings are with Premiers from across Canada. It's more general topics that we all are talking about. What I can commit to is that I will bring it up to our Northern Affairs Minister, and if I have one-on-one meetings with the deputy Prime Minister or the Prime Minister, at that point, I will bring it forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 315-19(2):  
CLAW-BACK OF INCOME ASSISTANCE FROM  
INUVIALUIT BENEFICIARIES

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I was speaking in my Member's statement about clawbacks in regard to Inuvialuit beneficiary cheques in regard to getting our yearly payment as a beneficiary. Is it correct, in my understanding, that beneficiary cheques used to be exempt from income support on clawbacks since 2007? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I spent a lot of time trying to learn the file, and I think I've done pretty well. I'm not up to date with what happened in 2007, so I can't confirm what the status of the program was in 2007. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. JACOBSON:** Why does the GNWT feel payments to beneficiaries across the Inuvialuit beneficiaries be clawed back from income support clients? Why?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** I understand the Member is using the term "clawback," but it's not like we're taking people's money. What happens is that the Income Assistance Program is there to provide people with their basic needs, and so, if there is money coming from another source, then that

money goes towards the basic needs, and the amount, that gap, is lessened. That's the situation here.

With that said, this is the first time I am hearing about this, and this is different from money that comes from an impact benefit agreement or a land claim. This is money that is earned through the corporations, I believe. It is earned income. With that being said, I am willing to look at this. Like I said, it's my first time hearing about it, but I'm hearing lots of suggestions from the Member. I am happy to sit down and look at the different types of income that is exempted.

**MR. JACOBSON:** When they are deducting disability benefits, old age benefits, land claim payouts, how much does it save the GNWT on all these clawbacks which should be given to the people? These are disability, old age. People need help. We are the highest paying for groceries in my riding. We are the most northerly riding, and we pay the highest prices. Why are they clawing back what little they get when our government doesn't have jobs to provide up there?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** The Member is right. People in the Northwest Territories, and especially in the Member's riding, pay more than anywhere else in Canada, and that is why the Income Assistance program in the Northwest Territories pays much more than any other program in Canada.

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

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister commit to amending the income support regulations to exempt claims for beneficiaries from all land claim groups? They do get benefits once per year. Would the Minister commit to amending their clawback system? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** I already committed to the Member to have a look at this. This is the type of work that I am glad is getting brought up here because these are the things that I was looking into prior to COVID sort of derailing things. It's nice to get back to business as usual. I have made an offer to the standing committee to make a presentation where we could sit down and have some more in-depth conversations on this, and I look forward to it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 316-19(2):  
ENFORCEABLE BENEFITS FROM RESOURCE  
DEVELOPMENT

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. Earlier today, I mentioned the recent Supreme Court of the Northwest Territories decision on the Acho Dene Koe First Nation case on the relationship of community investment plans to regulatory requirements under oil and gas legislation. Can the Minister tell us whether she has read or been briefed on this important case and what, if any, changes her department is going to make to ensure that Indigenous governments and all Northerners benefit from resource development? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I am aware of this case. We are working to update our benefit plan guidelines that do exist under our oil and gas legislation. When it comes into force, the MRA will give us the ability, in law, to establish measures that will generate benefits for all Northerners.

Mr. Speaker, I must remind the Member that Indigenous governments and all Northerners are already benefitting from resource development. Every producing mine has an associated socioeconomic agreement in addition to independent IVAs that are negotiated with Indigenous governments. Since 1996, under our SEAs, socioeconomic agreements, almost \$30,000 jobs have been realized for northern and Indigenous persons at our diamond mines. These same mines have spent over \$16 billion with northern companies and service providers. Our government receives royalties that ultimately benefit all people of the Northwest Territories. Indigenous governments also share in resource revenues under the devolution agreement. We are already benefitting, Mr. Speaker. Let's not forget that. Thank you.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I want to thank the Minister for that. I am not prepared to engage her in a debate in question period about whether there are benefits. My purpose here is to make sure that we benefit more from resource development. In August of last year, the Assembly completed its review and passed amendments to our oil and gas legislation that, among other things, would have done away with much of the secrecy around our management of those resources. Can the Minister tell us when those amendments will finally be brought into force and what is the source of the delay?

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** I am not sure that that work is delayed. Nevertheless, I can tell the Member that it is close to completion, and I am anticipating that we will be able to identify a target coming-into-force date fairly soon, possibly as early

as the end of this month. There are two things in particular that have taken some time. The Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas Operations, or OROGO, wanted the opportunity to develop two sets of guidelines and interpretation notes, which will help explain their application and administration of two of the amendments. These have now been drafted. More critically, our government needed to update our technology infrastructure to be able to host a secure, public-facing, online database. That is the work that is now almost done. When it is ready, we will go live and bring the legislation into force.

**MR. O'REILLY:** That's great news from the Minister. I am glad to hear that we are weeks away from flipping the secrecy onus. I certainly pushed very hard to get the public registry as part of the legislation. In my statement, I also referenced the extraordinary power and discretion of Cabinet and the Minister in deciding what, how, and when benefits might be secured from mineral development through enforceable agreements or plans. Can the Minister tell us what the implications of the Acho Dene Koe First Nation court case are in relation to securing benefits under the Mineral Resources Act, and when will those provisions actually be brought into force?

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** I don't believe that I am the first ITI Minister to admit that I can't predict the future. The one for-sure thing we can take from this court ruling is that, when it comes to petroleum projects in the Northwest Territories, a very clear distinction was made between benefit plans and agreements that might be signed between project proponents and Indigenous governments. Now, as far as our work on the Mineral Resources Act is concerned, I can tell you that, as we get back to the more regular business of government, these regulations will become a focal point for our government. This work will take time, and our planning for it is under way. The MRA is a brand new act. We are building some of the regulations from the ground up, and that will require research and input from multiple parties. What I will do is assure the Member that, as our work moves forward on this file, I will keep him and the rest of the Members of this House involved and informed, as already committed to during ITI's main estimates review.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for another piece of really great news. Of course, it's a challenging time in the Northwest Territories for resource development as we have so little control over commodity prices and financing. What assurance can the Minister provide

that securing benefits for Northerners from resource development to fulfill the promise of devolution is truly a priority as we enter an era of economic recovery? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** I am happy to provide the Member and this House with that assurance. Absolutely. It is part of our mandate, and I think it has been evidenced most recently in the rollout of our approach to COVID. I have said numerous times that we will need our resource sector to anchor our recovery. Mining and exploration are the biggest source of private sector jobs and income for our residents and, when they return to full operations, will once again be major buyers of products and services from Northwest Territories companies. We have worked with our mines and resource companies to ensure their safe and continued operation. We have taken steps to protect mineral tenure in the Northwest Territories by suspending payment and work requirements as we work on more comprehensive and coordinated relief measures. Also, the Mining Incentive Program has been adapted to support Northwest Territories prospectors and company-led mineral exploration projects to ensure that their projects this summer will be in line with orders and conditions of the Chief Public Health Officer. All of this, Mr. Speaker, because we recognize the importance of mining and resource development in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 317-19(2):  
COVID-19 PANDEMIC RELIEF FUNDS FOR  
EDUCATION

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of ECE. As I am aware that the department is working about the District Education Authorities on their plans for reopening in the fall, today, there was an article released by CBC that the DEC's were not informed about the decision that they have to fund from within COVID supplies. I hope this is not the case, as they don't have the budget. My question is: is the DEC responsible to cover this cost? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every single day, there are meetings between the assistant deputy minister of education and culture and all of the superintendents in the Northwest Territories. Every two weeks, I meet with the education leaders, the chairs of the 10 DEAs and DEC's in the territory, and there is constant

communication. We always make sure that we let the education bodies know what we are thinking, and we always want to know what they are thinking because, the way education is in the territory, it is so decentralized that we have to collaborate.

In terms of the costs, where we are right now is figuring out how we're going to reopen schools. The Chief Public Health Officer released a document that outlined how schools should be run in terms of the safety precautions that need to be taken, what sort of PPE is needed, what sort of distancing is needed, class sizes, and things like that. Since the day that that was released, ECE has been working with the education bodies to figure out how that could be implemented in the upcoming school year. I believe every school now has completed a plan. The Chief Public Health Officer is going to look at two of those plans, one from a big school and one from a small school, give feedback, and from there we can figure out if there will be extra costs. Then we can start talking about costs, but right now, we're not even at that point. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. SEMMLER:** In the way that this has been rolling out, it's been so quick with COVID. It's not the schools' fault that COVID happened, either. I'm just wondering: if the department is going to be working with the DEC's, will they have to cover the cost initially? How is this going to work? I know the Minister says it's not, but there has to be some kind of idea. Are they going to provide money, advanced money, or are they going to use within and bill back to the Department of Finance or wherever this COVID fund is? Are there COVID relief funds for schools?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** To the specific question: are there COVID relief funds? No. Those would have to come through this House, and that hasn't happened yet. Our budget, our main estimates, which we passed yesterday, that document was finalized before anyone had an idea that COVID was even coming to North America. There is nothing in there, and nothing has been in the supplementary estimates yet. However, we have allocated the full amount for the year to schools, so I don't think it's urgent that, on day one, we need to start making payments or deal with this because that entire amount is going to be available to them.

We're not going to leave schools hanging. That's the bottom line here. Students have had a rough break these past few months, and we need to make sure that they get back on track. We need to make sure that schools are supported. We're all in this together. ECE is in it with the education councils, and we're going to work together to make sure that what needs to get done gets done.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Before I arrived here, I wore a different hat. I'm very familiar with the Beaufort-Delta and the sizes of the schools and the number of students, and I'm very familiar with Inuvik East Three Elementary. We have a new school. Junior kindergarten got implemented. They took over the music room, the computer room. We have no space in that new school with junior kindergarten numbers, and I don't know where they calculate they can fit students in. We have on average about 450 students coming into our school in the fall that is already tight-fitted. How is the Department of ECE going to ensure that these students have proper-fitting PPE going into the fall?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** That's a good question about proper-fitting PPE. We can't just say students have to wear PPE and then not have stuff that fits them. Those are conversations that are happening right now. In terms of just PPE in general, ECE has received, I can't recall the numbers, but thousands of pieces of PPE have already been donated that are going out to the schools. The boxes of them are sitting here downtown right now. We're working on that. The Emergency Management Organization is procuring PPE for all government departments, including ECE. I can get back to the Member on those details because I have to say I don't have those exact details. It's a good question, and it's something we're going to have to work on.

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

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Minister of ECE to collaborate with ITI. I know that there was money available for supplies. As a past nurse, knowing that PPE is one-size-fits-all, so with little kids in junior kindergarten, they're not going to fit general PPE masks and gloves and things if they're going to need that. Can the Minister work with the Minister of ITI to maybe create some jobs in my community and in the rest of the Northwest Territories communities to maybe have some people sewing some masks and get on it in the summer and get some for the schools so that they can come up with a plan on how to do this? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** I do have the numbers about the PPE that have been donated. There have been 3,000 face shields donated. Those are going to be worn by the adults in the school, so that will be a couple each. Then 20,000 face cloth masks have been donated, and those come in various sizes for students. That being said, there will need to be more, so I'm happy to work with the Minister of ITI and figure out how we can do that and create some local employment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 318-19(2):  
REPLACEMENT OF CHIEF JIMMY BRUNEAU  
SCHOOL

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] As I spoke in my Member's statement earlier, when Chief Jully Bruneau asked for a school, that was about 50 years ago. Again, today, I ask about Education, Culture and Employment that is under education [End of translation] ...for a new school in our community of Behchoko. I would like to ask questions to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment about his capital plans for a community school. The first question I have for the Minister is: what criteria does his department use for deciding whether to build a new school or simply rehabilitate an existing building? Masi, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's a technical question. What happens is that there is an evaluation of the school done, the structure of it, and a determination made of whether or not it would be more cost effective to retrofit the school or rebuild it. When I say "retrofit," I don't mean just patch it up. I know that the Member said that in his statement, "patch it up." The school I went to, the school that my father went to, is 50 years old. It just got a retrofit, and it looks brand new. It's not just a patch job here and there; it's a full-on renovation. That determination is made on whether the school can safely be retrofitted or not. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Just moving on, my next questions is about feasibility. What has the Minister's done to determine the feasibility of replacing Chief Jimmy Bruneau School with a new modern school today?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** There was a technical evaluation done on Chief Jimmy Bruneau. It's a big school, and part of it is still good. What the technical evaluation showed is that the bones of the school are in great shape. There is part of it, the residence, which can't be retrofitted, and there is work to be done on the bus garage. Other than that, the Department of Infrastructure has looked into it, and the technical evaluation says that the school is in good shape and would last another few decades, I believe, with a retrofit.

**MR. LAFFERTY:** In the next few decades, it will be a 100-year-old school. This is not acceptable. The school is deteriorating. We may not see it on the surface, but it is. The maintenance crew obviously has been telling us, as well, but I'll move on to my next question because this is a question from my leadership and my community members of Behchoko. The education department has no



problem promising to replace J.H. Sissons in Yellowknife with a brand new school. Why is Chief Jimmy Bruneau School, which is five years older, not receiving the same treatment or consideration?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Just like people, the age of buildings isn't always necessarily the best indicator of what kind of shape their in. J.H. Sissons was in a shape where it needed to be replaced, whereas Chief Jimmy Bruneau is in much better condition. The Member is correct that there have been conversations with the Tlicho government. He accompanied me to Edzo, and we sat in the school and spoke with the Tlicho leadership. They made very clear what their preference would be. I made some commitments to them, and I followed through on those commitments. I am almost at the point where I am going to be reaching back out to the leadership.

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

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, my leadership has demanded a new school. I am glad that the Minister is following through with that. This is a very serious issue that is before us, a 50-plus-years-old school. It requires, obviously, demand from the school that they replace it with a new school. The next question I have to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, obviously, is a decision. Which of the two options, school replacement or renovation of the existing school, is the Minister leaning towards? This is a question from my leadership, Mr. Speaker. Masi.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Like I just said, I travelled with the Member to Edzo, and we sat in the school and had a conversation with the leadership. I am going to go back to the leadership, and we are going to have a discussion. I don't think that it's appropriate to have that discussion here on the floor of the House before I speak with the leadership. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### QUESTION 319-19(2): AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY

**MR. NORN:** Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Just to go back to what I said in my Member's statement earlier, it is always good to have more inclusion. I tried tying my Member's statement into how we should go forward with the GNWT and stuff. When I looked at the Affirmative Action Policy, there was a line here I thought that I should quote. I thought it was important. It says here, "No individual seeking employment, training, or career advancement opportunities in the public service should be disadvantaged or discouraged by attitudinal or

systemic barriers." I thought that was an important statement because it had to be said, and it still has to be said now; we're still talking about it now.

Going forward, we are still seeing this problem of disproportionately Indigenous people in jails, Aboriginal people in jails, low graduation rates, and stuff. I still get calls about hires. We're still getting all those people from down south who are getting our jobs, taking our jobs away. That's what I am hearing, but it would be nice to get some questions here. My first question to the Minister of Finance is: what is the current status of our Affirmative Action Policy, and when was the last time that this policy was reviewed? Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Affirmative Action Policy, in some form or other, has certainly been around for quite a long time, and it does indeed aim for exactly as the Member noted, which is to ensure that we have a representative workforce. It does provide an opportunity to give preferential access to certain target groups. As far as the reviews, Mr. Speaker, there have been some efforts towards a review as early as 1997. Standing committee was involved in the production of a review in 2000 and again in 2005, and there has certainly been work since then looking at the policy over the last 10 years. It has never actually made it to the point of a full and final review. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. NORN:** Thank you to the Minister for that response. Like I said before in this House, as well, for any working population, it should always be representative of the population served, and we are still not seeing that. With what the Minister just said, are there going to be any policy reviews within the life of this Assembly?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** The opportunity for review and the opportunity for change certainly comes with risks. I can certainly say that it is my intention to look at that policy and move it forward to determine if a review is really in the best interests and achieves the goals that we have for it. Where I am going with that is that it's figuring out what we want to get out of the Affirmative Action Policy that we are not getting. What is it that we are not getting that we would like to see changed?

I suppose, in a sense, that would be a review, Mr. Speaker, but as far as that will look like, where it will go, and what the end result will be, certainly, I can't say. I acknowledge that I have had many questions about the Affirmative Action Policy already. It doesn't seem to be achieving the things that people want it to achieve, the things that people think it should achieve, whether or not it is

achieving its actual content or not. It is time to look at whether or not there are better ways of achieving those goals.

**MR. NORN:** Again, thank you for that response. I think, going forward, it's always good to know where we sit and get a baseline of how all the policies are going from its inception until present. My next question is: can the Minister provide me with some statistics on how much success or perceived success this policy has had since its inception?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** As soon as I am hearing that there is a request for statistics, I do have human resources numbers in front of me over the last year. I don't have all of the numbers since the inception of the policy, and I am not sure that I will be able to go all the way back into the 1990s, but I certainly will have statistics available over time. As I understand it, Mr. Speaker, right now, we actually do fairly well at the GNWT in terms of hiring individuals able and available and interested in the positions. That doesn't mean that, every time, the process goes smoothly or that, every time, someone is satisfied with the process, but that's exactly the challenge that I think we have is that, right now, we're not achieving the goals that people perceive us to have or the goals that people would like us to have. I will certainly commit that I will get some numbers going back a reasonable period of time so that we can identify and see those trends. Hopefully, that will help go forward as to where we should take this.

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

QUESTION 320-19(2):  
ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND PERSONAL  
PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Education, and I quickly realized today, while sitting here, that the Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes and I are on the same page. I can save the Minister a little bit of time today and let him know that there will be increased costs to schools for PPE. The expectation is for schools to have physical barriers, for them to be able to have face masks, for them to have increased cleaning in the schools, a potential for increased staffing needs if a teacher has a runny nose, which, if anybody here knows kids, runny noses in the fall and kids are kind of like peanut butter and jam; they just happen. There are going to be increased costs because of COVID for schools this fall. Will the Department of Education, Culture and Employment ensure that school boards have access to that money because we all know that they don't have enough money that they need in order to run schools the way that we all, as

parents in the territory, expect them to be run today? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A lot of the things that the schools are doing won't cost extra money, but the Member is right that PPE is something that we didn't have before. You can make hallways one way and adjust drop-off times for students for free, but when it comes to PPE, then that is an issue. Right now, we are well on our way to providing schools with PPE. I am going to, obviously, find out what the needs are and go back to Cabinet and find out how we can support schools. I can't say what the final decision of the Financial Management Board is going to be, but like I have said before, I am here to support schools. I'm not going to leave them hanging. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** I'm happy to hear that, and I'm also happy to follow up with the Minister throughout the summer as he is able to work with the school boards. It was also brought to my attention that, in my constituency, and I am sure that this is consistent throughout the Northwest Territories, in the rush to get students set up at home, many of the schools emptied their resource and supply stashes so that children would have access to many learning items, whether it be books, markers, workbooks, anything they could get their hands on. Some kids even were able to go home with Chrome books. For the start of the school year in the fall, if students are in the schools, the schools are going to be starting with already a deficit of resources. I am wondering if the Minister would be willing to help the schools replenish those resource stashes and to count that as a COVID expense.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** It is my understanding that anything that can be counted as a COVID expense should be counted as a COVID expense. Then we're going to give the bill to the federal government, and hopefully, they pay. Like I said, we're trying to figure out what situation every single school is in. That's a process that we're undertaking right now, and then we can sit down and have these conversations. I am here to support the schools. Never once have I stood up here and said, "Schools need to pull themselves up by their boot straps." The Premier said this is going to be the most progressive government this territory's ever seen. While I can't commit money on the floor of the House, I can commit my support to working with the school boards and ensuring that they're taken care of.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** I am going to ask for some more money anyway. We live in a very small territory, and I have had the privilege of knowing

many teachers who have also shared with me the PowerPoint presentation that they received from the Chief Public Health Officer. I have seen what the expectation is for kids going back to school this fall, and as a parent and as a resident of the Northwest Territories, I definitely have my own concerns. We know just from what we've heard around Canada, through COVID, that one of the expectations is going to be limited extra-curricular for students in their classrooms, and that's stuff like drama, gym class, being able to do any type of assemblies or anything like that. As a parent of three young kids, I have a lot of concern because I know that even us as adults in this room, we have a hard time sitting still. Expecting young kids to sit still for seven hours a day, I feel it just isn't realistic. I am wondering if the Minister is willing to commit additional on-the-land training for students this fall.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Like I said, I'm not the one who signs the cheques around here. I'm anxious to see what the schools have come up with because the Member is right. There are a lot of restrictions on what can be done. There is no singing in schools, which is one of the saddest things I can think about saying. There won't be any indoor sports. Things like that. We have to come up with some different ways of doing things. A lot of schools combine on-the-land activities with Indigenous language revitalization. One thing ECE has done is: they can carry over that unspent Indigenous language money from last year forward. There are things like that. The plans that the schools come up with are really going to dictate what they're going to need. From there, we can figure out how to best support them. Like I said before, I feel like the education Minister who has already lost a year of school, and I'm not going to lose another one. Whatever we can do to ensure the students have the best possible education given the situation, I'm willing to do.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the Minister's response. My last question is a bit of a broad one, but I'm curious to see how the Minister will respond. We have had a lot of opportunity to really learn from COVID over the last three months, and to ask ourselves what we would do differently. What I would like to know from the Minister is what the Department of Education, Culture and Employment was able to learn from our last three months in COVID. Looking forward to a second wave, how would ECE better support school boards for a second wave, and how would they ensure that no child is left behind? Thank you.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** It is a big question and especially because the delivery of education is out

of ECE's hand. It is so decentralized that it's the education bodies that are delivering education. If I could do anything, it would be to work harder to ensure that students were able to stay in school. I know there was a big desire to close schools, and rightfully so. I remember the night before, it was a Thursday night, I believe, and this Assembly was thinking, "What are we going to do? Should we just call things off?" That's what ended up happening. Essentially, the same thing with the schools. I think what I've learned personally that there are things that we can do to keep students in school because it is so important to have students in school. It's a safe space for them. For a lot of students, it's their only safe space. For a lot of students, it's where they get their meals, and developmentally, it's so important to them. The biggest takeaway I would get is figuring out how we can ensure that students stay in school, maintain those connections with teachers and friends in these times. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### QUESTION 321-19(2): BORDER RESTRICTIONS

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. In her statement today, the Minister said the change in implementing travel restrictions took place on May 29<sup>th</sup>. My first question is: why did it take until today for Regular Members to get formal notice of this? Thank you.

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

**HON. DIANE THOM:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like I said in my statement, the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer has been working hard, looking at putting together the Emerging Wisely plans, looking at each of the different phases, while in the meantime looking at border restrictions and putting in place some of the measures that have happened. I mentioned on May 27<sup>th</sup> the border enforcement stood down on refusing entry into the NWT for non-residents, and then we had to take into consideration the Canadian Charter of Freedoms. There are a number of things that have taken place. The Office of the Chief Public Health Officer has been working to ensure that, as changes come into place, we communicate that.

**MS. GREEN:** That wasn't an answer to the timing and the communications. Communications have been a really huge challenge during this pandemic, and now there's this added challenge of the change at the border. The reason it matters is because people have made choices since May 29<sup>th</sup> to not

have people come to visit them because they didn't think they were eligible to come, to make a number of adjustments in their lives that they would not have made if they knew that the border restrictions had changed. I'm going to repeat my question because it is important to my constituents. Why did it take until today to learn about this change?

**HON. DIANE THOM:** I do want to go back a little bit. While that order was written to restrict travel within the territories, which is the power granted by the Chief Public Health Officer under the Public Health Act, we came to realize that the communications and the actions at the border were not keeping with the Charter and the Order. That happened back in April, and then in May, we realized that we need to take into consideration the recommendations from the Canadian Charter of Rights. People took our communications to act, actions to mean that the borders were closed. Our Office of the Chief Public Health Officer took that into consideration. Yes, I agree it's taken some time for us to communicate that, but as soon as we did find out within our Cabinet, that's what we did.

**MS. GREEN:** Unfortunately, the effect of this Q and A session is to create more confusion. What I understand is that the borders never were closed, even though we were told they were closed, and that the Chief Public Health Officer made a change. For whatever reason, we weren't told until today about that change. There are real things at stake in telling people that the border is closed. People who were looking forward to family visits and, in some cases, family reunification have been waiting for a relaxation of restrictions. I don't know if that exists now or not. I just know that whatever change was made wasn't communicated to us for almost two weeks. Can the Minister tell us again why it's taken this long to get here and whether there can be more efficient communication between the CPHO and her department?

**HON. DIANE THOM:** Absolutely. I recognize that there is room for improvement in communication, and that is something that our department is working with Chief Public Health Officer to ensure that the communication, when any of the actions that are being made out of the Chief Public Health Office, that we have a process to follow. Therefore, our Cabinet has come up with a communication plan. Going forward, there are steps that are in place so that we can ensure that there is a process before it gets out into the public. We recognize that.

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

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Minister for that answer. When constituents ask me questions about whether their mother can come to visit or whether they can have their partner

relocate here, I usually say to them, "You should call 811 or email Protect NWT," but what I'm hearing is that it can take days, even weeks, to get an answer to their questions. They're looking for a more immediate response. My question to the Minister is whether Protect NWT needs more staff in order to provide a tighter turn-around to residents of the NWT for their questions about who is and isn't allowed in. Thank you.

**HON. DIANE THOM:** The Member is correct. Our Chief Public Health Office and our enforcement and our compliance enforcement are quite busy. Just to put this in perspective, on average, we get 1,106 new calls per week, average follow-up calls on a weekly basis, about 228 calls. Average new emails are about 353, follow-up emails 321. Average self-isolation plans that we have processed and closed is about 337 plans a week. I'm just saying our office is quite busy. We recognize that because some of our enforcement staff are having to be repatriated back into their government jobs. Fire crews are going back to fight the fires soon. We recognize that, but there has never been a gap in our system. We continue to work hard to make sure that we have enough people in place. We're actively recruiting. There are a number of things that our department is doing in collaboration with all the other departments. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 322-19(2):  
COMMUNICATIONS WITHIN NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we often do in this House, I'm going to ask some question that I believe I already know the answers to. I, as a Regular Member, am unable to pick up the phone and call a public servant and ask them a technical question. My question for the Premier is: why is that? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've only been in the Assembly here, this is my second Assembly, but I think this is probably an age-old question, in my opinion, because even in the last Assembly, they were talking about asking the Assembly before. When I first was in the Assembly four years ago, I thought it was okay. Anybody could pick up the phone and call my staff. In fact, I think I gave that direction to an MLA. It soon bit me, Mr. Speaker. The reason that we try not to, there are two reasons. One is accountability. It's really important that Ministers know the issues that are going on the departments because if we don't know, how are we going to change things?

That's one thing. The other thing that was even more important to me, and maybe not at the same level, but it was critical for me in making a decision in the last Assembly was the intimidation of staff. Staff complained about it. They said that when an MLA goes to their office and asks them, they feel tense. They don't know what to say to them. They automatically see them as an MLA; they can take their job away. There is a whole bunch of power and inequalities with that. Those are the reasons, Mr. Speaker. It's about accountability and protecting our staff. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. JOHNSON:** What I believe has happened here is that there have been some very egregious examples in the past of MLAs really crossing the line and getting political with staff. I believe the spectrum has swung to the full other side of the spectrum where simple, technical questions that are better suited to a phone call go through multiple email chains. I would encourage the Premier to look at this policy and try and change the culture such that, sometimes, the nuanced conversation can happen over the phone. My next question is: I recognize some of the limitations in myself as an MLA in talking to public servants, but I believe also this limitation has been more and more imposed on journalists. My question is: are journalists allowed to pick up the phone and talk to any member in the public service? For example, could a journalist talk to the lead negotiator for Akaitcho, a member in the Premier's own department?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Journalists often pick up the phone and phone our departments. In fact, they sometimes get a hold of me. Again, it's not about trying to keep secrets. It's about processes. When you talk about the Akaitcho, when you talk about land claim agreements and stuff, there is a risk that those are partnerships between my department, the Government of the Northwest Territories, and Indigenous governments. We have to be very careful what we're saying in those. It would be more appropriate to go through a Minister for that to make sure, if there is anything controversial, then I'd certainly want to call the chief and say, "Is this okay?" There are processes with that, probably wasn't the best example to use. Again, it's about keeping track of the questions. We do have a whole communications department. When the media do go through the communications department, a lot of them can get quicker answers. They get better quality answers, and we can keep track of the issues. Keeping track tells us what we need to change.

**MR. JOHNSON:** I believe many journalists may disagree with the statement that they get better answers, but I'll leave them to advocate for themselves. I recognize that we have to have processes in place and track them, but I believe that this culture has then trickled onto members of

the public. I consistently get constituents that have unanswered phone calls, unanswered emails. My question to the Premier: is a member of the public allowed to pick up the phone and talk to any single person in the public service?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Absolutely. Any member of the public can phone any department to the Government of the Northwest Territories and ask about our programs and services that we provide. However, in saying that, our employees, there is a balance, again. It's between confidentiality and informing them about programs. If it's only about asking, "What programs, services do you have?" go ahead, call. If you're phoning to ask about somebody's income support or somebody in housing, you're not going to get that answer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Honourable Premier. Final supplementary, Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to hear that. I really wish I had the power that a member of the public has. My question to the Premier is: this is largely a cultural thing. It's hard to change when to empower public servants to know when they can't talk to media, what they can and cannot say. I recognize the Akaitcho example has some nuance. I really do believe we need to redraft the language in our communications policy to be more proactive and encourage all members of the public servants to be encouraged to pick up the phone and call stakeholders, call the public, call the media. Is the Premier willing to draft some more proactive language into that policy?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** I think that Members would agree that this government has been trying to work on our communications as we go forward. Out of that, and I'm not even sure if we have a policy on that, but my understanding is any employee in the Government of the Northwest Territories should be reaching out to their applicable stakeholders, if that is in their position and direction from their managers. If it's something that's politically sensitive or inappropriate, there is a chain of command, and that's why managers make those. However, excuse me if I use an example, if it's an income support worker, absolutely, they should be phoning their clientele and find out questions. That is something we've always promoted. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 323-19(2):  
ADDICTIONS ON-THE-LAND INITIATIVES

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I understand there are addictions treatment options in the South for residents of the Northwest Territories to attend. What these facilities have is qualified counselling services. The health Minister has stated several times that the on-the-land program offered by the health department can be accessed by First Nations. The program description states, "This will support community-based and operated on-the-land programs that have clear stated goals and outcome to treat addictions." Will the Minister commit to having the department assist with identifying qualified counselling services that can be accessed by First Nations wanting to provide addictions counselling as part of their on-the-land initiatives? Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. Minister of Health and Social Services.

**HON. DIANE THOM:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Deh Cho region has a number of supports available for individuals experiencing addictions. The Community Counselling Program is one example that is available to all residents in the region. It's currently fully staffed and is located in Simpson, Providence, and Fort Liard. These counsellors provide support to residents in the Deh Cho communities, using telephones for communities that don't have a resident counsellor. Since the onset of COVID-19, the Community Counselling Program has shifted to providing services over the phone or using virtual options like Zoom or FaceTime. We are looking at some of the ways that we can do on-the-land programming, keeping in mind that we have the COVID-19. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi for that. They also state that they have a variety of supports and tools, and a successful aftercare program is required. Will the Minister commit to providing funding and resources to First Nations to provide alcohol and drug counsellors for the ongoing aftercare program required for a successful addictions treatment program?

**HON. DIANE THOM:** The department has a budget for mental health and addictions in the tune of \$17,463,000. It includes on-the-land. It includes facility-based addiction treatment programs, community-based counselling, youth addictions prevention, withdrawal management models, aftercare options that support addressing homelessness. There are quite a variety of programs that our department is doing to address mental wellness and addictions.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Masi for that. On my first one, she states that they have community counselling programs, but she didn't answer the part whether they would be available to First

Nations as part of their on-the-land initiatives. That's going out on the land, whether it's down the river or in the winter programs. I didn't get an answer on that one, if maybe the Minister can clarify on that one.

**HON. DIANE THOM:** The first question was kind of a two-fold question, so I maybe answered the first one but not the second one. On the second one, in terms of the on-the-land funding, on-the-land funding is a partnership between the Department of Health and Social Services authorities and the various Indigenous groups to provide on-the-land funding, and these programs that are available to everybody.

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

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** I have no more questions.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Colleagues, our time for oral questions has expired. Item 8, written questions. Member for Frame Lake.

### Written Questions

#### WRITTEN QUESTION 14-19(2): CONTRACTS FOR WORK RELATED TO THE TALTSON HYDRO EXPANSION

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Infrastructure. Please provide a list of all contracts entered into by the Government of the Northwest Territories for work related to the Taltson Hydro Expansion, including studies on submarine transmission lines, from September 1, 2015, to present, and:

1. Indicate the date of the contract signing, date of completion or anticipated completion, whether the contract was sole-sourced, the value of the contract, the general purpose or scope of the work, whether there were any financial or scope amendments and a summary of same, and the name and location of the contractor;
2. In providing the list of contracts, indicate whether any of the contractors were or are registered under the Business Incentive Policy and received such consideration in the evaluation of bids or proposals; and
3. What future actions are planned to maximize northern employment, training, and business opportunities in future contracts related to the Taltson Hydro Expansion?

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Written questions. Item 9, returns to written

questions. Item 10, replies to Commissioner's address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, reports of standing and special committees. Item 14, tabling of documents. Minister of Finance.

### Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 137-19(2):  
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (OPERATIONS  
EXPENDITURES), NO. 1, 2020-2021

TABLED DOCUMENT 138-19(2):  
STATISTICS ACT ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

TABLED DOCUMENT 139-19(2):  
FINAL REPORT SROI: INTEGRATED CASE  
MANAGEMENT, FEBRUARY 2020

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following three documents entitled "Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021"; "Statistics Act Annual Report 2019-2020"; and "Final Report SROI: Integrated Case Management, February 2020." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 140-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION  
251-19(2): BORDER SECURITY

TABLED DOCUMENT 141-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION  
275-19(2): NWT ADDICTIONS TREATMENT  
FACILITIES

**HON. DIANE THOM:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents entitled "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 251-19(2): Border Security"; and "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 275-19(2): NWT Addictions Treatment Facilities." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Item 15, notice of motion. Item 16, motions. Item 17, notice of motion for the first reading of bills. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Tabled Document 130-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2020-2021; Tabled Document 137-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021, with the Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes in the chair.

### Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

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

**MR. NORN:** Marsi cho, Madam Chair. Committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 130-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2020-2021.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, committee. We will take a short recess.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** I am now calling committee back to order. Minister of Finance, do you have witnesses?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Yes, I do.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Sergeant-at-Arms, can you please escort the witnesses into the Chamber? I think we're on page 12. Minister, will you please introduce your witnesses?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, we have Mr. Terence Courtoreille, who is the director of Management Board Secretariat, and Jamie Koe, who is the assistant deputy minister for Finance.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Welcome, Mr. Courtoreille and Mr. Koe. We are going to continue on page 12, and we are going to go to detail. On page 12, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2020-2021, Industry, Tourism and Investment, capital investment expenditures, economic diversification and business support for \$9,616,000, not previously authorized. Do we have any questions, comments for section? Seeing none, I will move on to tourism and parks, not previously authorized, \$3,831,000, and that continues onto page 13. Any questions? Comments? Seeing none, I will go to total department, not previously authorized, \$13,447,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, committee. I am going to go right to detail for this Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2020-2021, Infrastructure, capital investment expenditures, asset management, not previously authorized,

\$36,398,000. Questions? Comments? Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

**MR. NORN:** Marsi cho, Madam Chair. I'm just looking at some of these line items. I probably will have questions for any time I see "various" on it because it's good to know, a good breakdown. Again, jobs are hard to come by. Contracts are hard to come by, especially in the small communities, and it will be just nice to know some of the breakdowns of this because it does mean a lot, have an impact on jobs for this fiscal year. Just get the Minister to give us a breakdown, what the various items mean? Marsi cho.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance, the ones that have various beside them.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, Madam Chair. I do note a list of them, and I anticipate that the ones that are along roadways, for instance, Highway No. 8 reconstruction, various meaning along the roadway. I'm not sure that we'd be in a position, at this point, to breakdown. I'm just double checking what I do have in front of me. I don't think we're in a position, Madam Chair, to breakdown each and every location at which, for example, culvert replacement would have occurred or which bridge anywhere in the Northwest Territories might necessarily would have been worked on. It certainly can be provided. Madam Chair, I think I would have to provide a more detailed breakdown and commit to provide that more detailed breakdown at another time.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

**MR. NORN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Maybe I could probably just make it a little more simplified again. What I'm trying to get is: to make sure that small communities, and there's more of an equal opportunity there for small communities. If you get a breakdown of, say, Yellowknife and larger centres, how much they get, and what did the rest of the small communities get is what I'd like to ask. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Certainly, if it's broken down in that way, that's not a problem. I anticipate, though, the needs assessment is not so much in order to give money to the communities so much as it's to ensure that assets are being maintained to a certain level. It matters not to me how the Member wants to take the information. We'll get the information to the Member, and he can use it in however he sees fit.

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

**MR. NORN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm okay with that, just as long as we get something. Just so we know, it will give us a good snapshot of where these allocations are going, and I think the people know. Marsi cho.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** You have no further questions? Thank you. Any other further question, comments, for page 14 under asset management, not previously authorized? Asset management, not previously authorized, \$36,398,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Now, we'll move onto corporate management, not previously authorized, \$12,365,000. Questions? Comments? Member for Yellowknife Centre.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Can the Minister tell us how much of this spending is going to be spent in the North and/or with Indigenous northern companies? Is that something that's known at this point?

**CHAIRPERSON (MS. SEMMLER):** Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, these are carryover amounts. They'd already been committed as part of the project, so it would really be a breakdown of the entirety of the project, which is not necessarily information I have right in front of me here in terms of each and every contract that's been awarded under the project or that might yet be awarded under the project. Although, we can certainly provide a more detailed breakdown of those projects. Both of these are fairly long-term projects and I expect will be part of capital planning process that's getting started next month. That information should be readily available.

**CHAIRPERSON (MS. SEMMLER):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, I appreciate the Minister pulling this information together. We learned sometime recently that 10 percent of the Slave Geological Province contracts have actually gone to northern contractors. I'm interested to know what it looks like for the Mount Gaudet access road and for the Mackenzie Valley Highway environmental assessment. I would appreciate receiving that information. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (MS. SEMMLER):** Thank you, Member. Did you have any other questions? Member for Frame Lake.



**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. This page, there is an amount of over \$10 million for Mackenzie Valley Highway environmental assessment. When I look at the review board public registry for the environmental assessment of the Mackenzie Valley Highway, the last document posted there is November 28, 2018. Can someone tell me what's happened for the last two years with this environmental assessment and why GNWT doesn't seem to be doing anything? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (MS. SEMMLER):** Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Some of the negotiation processes that went on were with the Indigenous governments along the highway. For instance, an MOU was signed between SSI chairperson and the Minister of Infrastructure back on April 10, 2019, so that was a fairly significant step that took some time to get to. With that underway, now those organizations need to undertake the work there contained therein. With that, at this point, that then allowed them to move forward and take the next steps required to continue the environmental assessment process. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (MS. SEMMLER):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. The last piece of correspondence I can see from GNWT on the public registry is dated November 29, 2018. It's a promise that there is further work that's going to take place and that government's going to update the board with regard to its anticipated timelines. When does this government expect to re-engage with the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board restart this process? It's been like a year and a half since they've communicated with the review board. What is going on? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (MS. SEMMLER):** Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Certainly, my information is that there have been steps that are underway, steps that are being taken. The work is proceeding both in terms of the, as I mentioned, engagements with local Indigenous communities and also ongoing work with the boards. Madam Chair, I think that may be something that I can certainly direct this over to the Minister of Infrastructure, but as far as the carry-overs go, the carry-over from my perspective wouldn't be allowed if the contracts weren't in place and if the work wasn't progressing. They certainly have come forward and met that standard and met that requirement in order to be

sort of put forward as a request for the carry-over supplementary appropriation. That is why we've put it forward here. Again, I'm fairly confident that those details will have to be available when this comes forward in the capital planning process. We're certainly going to be facing those questions again in that stage, as well. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (MS. SEMMLER):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes. This environmental assessment has been going on since, I think, 2013. I've raised this with Members of this Cabinet before. You don't go for an environmental assessment until you actually have a proper project defined. Otherwise, you're wasting a lot of different people's times. If we haven't been back to the board since November of 2018, this amount is actually a carry-over, and we haven't communicated timelines to the review board but carrying money over. I'm not sure this is a great way to communicate and try to expedite getting some of the money out the door. I guess that's more of a comment, Madam Chair, than anything else. I'm disappointed that we haven't communicated with the board in a year and a half to provide timelines and update what's going on, even the public. I know that there are some consultations apparently underway, but if you don't communicate what you're doing, you're carrying over money, this is not good on what's supposed to be a major flagship infrastructure project again. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (MS. SEMMLER):** Thank you, Member. Did you have any further questions, comments on this section? No? Okay. Back to corporate management, not previously authorized, \$12,365,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (MS. SEMMLER):** Again, under the Department of Infrastructure, capital investment and expenditures, activity programs and services, not previously authorized, \$1,121,000. What's the term I want to use? Sorry. It's reduction. Thank you.

---Laughter

Reduction in this budget. Questions? Comments? Seeing none. Programs and services, not previously authorized, a reduction of \$1,121,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (MS. SEMMLER):** Total department, not previously authorized, \$47,642,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (MS. SEMMLER):** All right. Now, we will be turning to page 17, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2020-2021, Department of Justice, capital investment expenditures, activity, corrections, not previously authorized, \$2,354,000. Questions? Comments? Seeing none. Corrections, not previously authorized, \$2,354,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (MS. SEMMLER):** On to the next activity, court services, not previously authorized, \$282,000. Questions? Comments? Court services, not previously authorized, \$282,000. Does committee agree? Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm looking for a general update. This is \$282,000 into the Yellowknife Courthouse, a building that we don't actually own. I know there has been a number of upgrades, and we keep putting money into someone else's building. Can I just get an update from the Minister? Are there plans to build a new courthouse? How long are we in this lease for, and are we going to continue to put money into Northview's building? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. At this time, there are no plans for a new courthouse. The cost of a new courthouse would still far and exceed the ability right now to undertake that kind of a project. I can say I believe the lease is 2026. I will correct myself later if I am wrong about that. At this point, it does have a lot of money invested in it, so hopefully, it is more than up to the task over the next short-term coming future. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess I will ask this question at a later time. I caution that we are sinking millions of dollars into a building that we don't own, and the lease is coming due in 2026. It doesn't seem like the best bargaining position to be in with your landlord. I am sure that the Minister is well aware of that. Can I just get an update of what the Legal Aid Information System project is, the \$100,000? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** We'll call this activity item first, and then we'll go to the next one. Okay? Thank you. Do you have any more questions on court services? I will call this activity, then. Court services, not previously authorized, \$282,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Legal Aid services, \$100,000. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Can I just have an explanation of what this \$100,000 for the Legal Aid Information System project is? Is this essentially the project that we use to replace the law library? Can I just have an explanation of what that is and what this money goes to? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. No, Madam Chair, this is entirely within the Legal Aid facility's instructors in terms of case management and case files. It's a technology-based project. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Sorry. Yes, I was confused as to what this is. I am very supportive of this. I think that Legal Aid long needs some technology to get all its case files in order. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Any further questions on Legal Aid services, \$100,000? I will call the page. Legal Aid services, not previously authorized, \$100,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Total department, not previously authorized, \$2,736,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Now, we will turn to page 18, the last page. Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2020-2021, Department of Lands, capital investment expenditures, activity operations, not previously authorized, \$114,000. Questions? Comments? Seeing none, I will call this. Operations, not previously authorized, \$114,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Total department, not previously authorized, \$114,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, committee. Do you agree that you have concluded consideration of Tabled Document 130-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2020-2021?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** All right. Thank you, Minister. Thank you to the witnesses appearing before us. Are they going to be the same witnesses? Okay. You can just stay there, and we will get through the process for the next one. Does committee agree that this concludes consideration of Tabled Document 130-19(2)?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Are we concluding the consideration of the supplementary right now? I want to seek indulgence of the committee to go back to page 15, the last item on the page. It says, "Taltson Expansion, pre-construction, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada," and there is an amount close to \$2 million. I would just like to know what that is about, please. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Okay. Does committee agree that we want to go back? Seeing nothing, you're okay? We're okay? Okay. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Can I get some explanation here as to what this carry-over is all about? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance, on page 15, programs and services.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't know if my pages are the same as yours, but regardless, Madam Chair, I am familiar enough to be able to tell you that -- yes, sorry. Madam Chair, that is funded by the federal funding, and it was just a carry-over that was required because the federal funding simply wasn't spent in the last year, Madam Chair. It's ongoing work that is happening. The money is there from the federal government and needs to be carried over. I am not sure if the Member wants more explanation for that. I can certainly turn it over to Mr. Koe if he does.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes, I would like to just get some details. Is some of this

money for engagement with Indigenous governments, or what is this work that's being carried over? What's that all about? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Mr. Koe.

**MR. KOE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member is correct. This is part of the \$18 million that was funded by the federal government as part of the Taltson expansion. This was the first year of the funding, so this is a carry-over of work that wasn't completed. You're correct; it was for things like engagement and that type of thing in the first year of the project. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Some of it is for engagement. Is some of it for planning, design work, or is it just a big bag? I'm just trying to understand what this is going to pay for. If the witnesses can't provide that now, I'm happy to get it. If I could get it by tomorrow would be even better, but I might be pushing it. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The \$18 million certainly was for everything, for environmental planning, Indigenous engagements, and design. I wasn't sure exactly what the \$1.9 there or \$2 million specifically was for, but with that explanation, at least, thus far, I suspect we can get some further breakdown probably by tomorrow. Again, if it's the entire \$18 million, that might take a bit more time, but just in terms of at least maybe project status, I gather, is probably what the Member is looking for, and we can probably provide that.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Any further questions?

**MR. O'REILLY:** No. Thanks very much.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** You're welcome. I would like to say thank you again to the Minister and the witnesses. Does committee agree that this concludes consideration of Tabled Document 130-19(2)?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** All right. Mr. Norn.

COMMITTEE MOTION 15-19(2):  
CONCURRENCE MOTION – TABLED  
DOCUMENT 130-19(2): SUPPLEMENTARY  
ESTIMATES (INFRASTRUCTURE  
EXPENDITURES), NO. 2, 2020-2021,  
CARRIED

**MR. NORN:** Marsi cho, Madam Chair. I move that consideration of Tabled Document 130-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2020-2021, be now concluded, and Tabled Document 130-19(2) be reported and recommended as ready for further consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. Marsi cho, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Mr. Norn. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Tabled Document 130-19(2) will be reported as ready for consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill.

Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 137-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures) No. 1, 2020-2021. Does the Minister of Finance have any opening remarks?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Yes, Madam Chair. Thank you. Madam Chair, I am here to present Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures) No. 1, 2020-2021. The supplementary estimates document proposes a total increase of \$65.1 million, comprised of the following major items:

- \$36.8 million in support of the GNWT's emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The funding is offset by revenues from the federal government.
- \$13.7 million to support advancing the GNWT's mandate priorities.
- \$7.4 million to continue the First Nations and Inuit Home and Community Care Agreement. These costs are fully offset by funding from the federal government.
- \$1.9 million for additional investments recommended by Members of the Legislative Assembly in their review of the 2020-21 Main Estimates.

That concludes my opening remarks. We would be happy to answer any questions that Members might have.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. For the record, I will just recognize your witnesses.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you. Madam Chair, on the left, we have Terence Courtoreille here, who is director of Management Board Secretariat, and on the right, Jamie Koe, who is the Assistant Deputy Minister of Finance.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. I now open the floor to general comments. Seeing no general comments, we will review the supplementary estimates by department. The committee has agreed to begin the review with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Committee have agreed to forego general comments on the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditures, so we will proceed to the detail contained in the tabled document. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures) No. 1, 2020-2021, Department of Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditures, culture, heritage, and language, not previously authorized, \$150,000. Questions? Comments? Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am really happy to see this increased funding for Indigenous languages. I am just curious, and I believe the Minister spoke to this previously, so I apologize. The difference between the \$150,000 line item here for Indigenous language revitalization and the \$450,000 line item for Indigenous language revitalization, I see they are in two different units of ECE, but if I could just get a distinction between those? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Sorry. I see the \$150,000 line item that the Member is referencing.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** I think he is referring to under "labour development and advanced education." There is a \$450,000 line item. Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am looking over at the Minister of ECE, if we could go to him, please.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I know that we are on this number here, but these

two numbers are connected. There is \$600,000 total in here for Indigenous language revitalization. The \$450,000 is being put towards the development of an Indigenous languages immersion pilot program, and the \$150,000 is going to Indigenous governments with the idea that that can be used to cover the costs that aren't covered by SFA to have people attend this program. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister of ECE. Member for Yellowknife North, did you have any further questions?

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. No, I'm very happy to see that. I just always like to see when Indigenous language funding is coming forward, that its focus is on immersion, because I think that's really how we create new speakers. I am very happy to see that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. My question is actually about the next section. Maybe you could put me on the list for that. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** All right. Do we have any other comments or questions under culture, heritage, and language? Seeing none, culture, heritage, and language, not previously authorized, \$150,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** The next activity is early childhood and school services, \$1,113,000, not previously authorized. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to know how the funding for additional childcare spaces is going to be made available. Is this money going to be made available for childcare associations, for day homes, for parents? What is the plan for this money? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This is intended to create an opportunity to help subsidize the cost of space acquisition, renovations, and repairs. It is intended and directed towards early learning and childcare programs. This would be, for example, providing non-government organizations funding for facility repairs or to address code issues and undertake

retrofits in order to support having more childcare spaces. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to the Minister for that answer. How do organizations access this money? What's the entry point? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This is a new program, and I am not sure how far along the Minister of ECE is on it, but he is maybe better placed to at least speak to what state that program is at. Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. ECE has regional childcare coordinators in five regions, and they have relationships with the existing programs. They keep themselves apprised of organizations who may wish to start a childcare program. Right now, we have identified criteria. To determine the program's eligibility, there needs to be demonstrated need for physical space that will result in additional new licensed early learning and childcare spaces. The applicant must be able to provide a portion of the cost. Funding can be used to build new buildings or retrofit existing buildings, including both non-GNWT and GNWT assets, and projects will be prioritized to meet demands in areas of greatest need. Right now, we have identified Fort Smith as an area of great need, Norman Wells, and are consulting with the regional childhood coordinators to identify other needs for the remainder of the funds. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I thank the Minister for that information. Is it possible for the Minister to put that information in a letter and send it to the Standing Committee on Social Development? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Yes, I would be happy to share this information with the standing committee. As the Minister mentioned, it is quite new, so that information hasn't started flowing yet. I will make sure that happens. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you. My last question in this area is the order in which the money will flow. Is it a first-come-first-approved situation? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is a very new program. There are some places that need childcare, we have known for a long time that need childcare, and we know that infrastructure is the issue. We have identified those places and are working to identify others and are targeting those. I want to make sure that we get some things done. I want to make sure we get some childcare spaces that are going to be sustainable in place, especially where there isn't licensed childcare currently or not a lot of it. It's a bit more targeted, perhaps, but we're going to make sure that we get some things done with this money. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Are there any further comments or questions under the early childhood school services? Seeing none, early childhood and school services, not previously authorized, \$1,113,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** The next activity is labour development and advanced education, not previously authorized, \$832,000. Questions or comments? Seeing none, labour development and advanced education, not previously authorized, \$832,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Total department, not previously authorized, \$2,095,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Please turn to page 5. We are now considering the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, operations expenditures, and we will proceed to the detail contained in the tabled document. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures) No. 1, 2020-2021, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, operations expenditures, corporate management, not previously authorized, \$322,000. Questions? Comments? Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. The increase to the Community Harvester Assistance Program, as I understand, this is probably even an

over-subscribed program. Is there going to be some effort to continue to increase that, especially in light of the pandemic and so on? What is the status of that program? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe, and I probably will hear whispers if I'm wrong, that this program is actually under review right now. There certainly is a recognition of the importance of increasing access to the ability to undertake harvesting, but there is a recognition that there needs to be a real encouragement to young people and to provide mentorship. This does, indeed, cover the shortfall. This covers the difference between the actual subscriptions and requests, as compared to the base funding. There is not an intent at this moment in time to necessarily increase that further, but I think there is certainly a desire to ensure that there is movement toward supporting young people to undertake mentorship. In the meantime, the shortfall on this program has been topped up. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Any sense of when this review is going to be completed, and can I get a commitment out of somebody to share that with the Regular MLAs? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't have a date here, and I think, just in light of the fact that, sadly, again, with COVID-19 there may have been some delays, may or may not, but I will make the commitment that we'll get that confirmation of the target date to the Member.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. That was the first part of my question. There were two parts, though. The second part was: can I get a commitment out of someone, a Minister, to share that in draft form with standing committee before it's finalized and released? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, that makes sense, now, the whispers I was hearing behind me. Yes, they will make sure that the report

does get shared with the committee. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Any other questions, comments, under corporate management? All right. Corporate management, not previously authorized, \$322,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Environmental stewardship and climate change, not previously authorized, \$1,468,000. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm happy to see that we are establishing a climate change council. Is there a terms of reference, or do we know who is going to be on that climate change council? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. No, I don't think that those steps necessarily have been taken yet, but I'm fairly confident that the Minister of ENR will want to work with getting those forward and keeping committee informed as the steps progress. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I see that there is \$1.4 million here for Part 2 of the Climate Change Strategic Framework Action Plan. I believe part 2 is some of the most important work we're doing in the GNWT. There are a number of research components to it that will essentially show what the costs are. It will allow us to finish our hazard mapping for communities. It will allow us to get a lot more information for private owners of the risks their buildings are experiencing due to climate change, especially melting permafrost. I do think there is a lot of change and work that still needs to be done on the action plan, but first and foremost, when I look at Part 2 of the Climate Change Strategic Framework Action Plan, \$1.4 million doesn't come close to even implementing what it's attempting, so can I get a sense from the Minister of whether this is sufficient funding to implement our action plan? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This funding is to get Phase 2 of the climate change action plan moving forward, but certainly, depending on the outcomes of what is

found in that study, there may well be fairly significant asks that come forward as a result of that. However, this is certainly the next step, and this is a sufficient amount of money in order to be able to take that next step and to then provide the information required to determine what future steps might be needed. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. Part of the issues and why we're creating a climate change council is that the Auditor General said there is a lack of authority and clear direction of who is in charge of climate change in the GNWT, and some of that accountability is missing. Much of the research and work to be done in part 2 is addressing that. I'm looking for a commitment out of the Minister that the terms of reference of the climate change council will be shared. Ultimately, in order for them to succeed, we're going to have to really break down some departmental silos, and they are going to have to be able to make not recommendations, basically orders that we build things a certain way, we assess things a certain way, and really reach into departments to have that transformative adaptation, if we hope to remotely keep a stable budget in light of the costs we're going to see due to climate change. That's a lot I'm asking. Can I have a commitment from the Minister that the terms of reference and who is on the climate change council will be shared with the appropriate committee? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, the terms of reference will be shared with committee, and perhaps that will be an opportunity at that time for the Member to address the more detailed questions to the department when they are before committee at that stage. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Any further questions or comments? Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. The line item on this page that my colleague from Yellowknife North just mentioned was the Part 2 of the Climate Change Strategic Framework Action Plan, and I was just looking at the document. It goes on for pages and pages. What specific parts is this going to fund? The value of that work has got to be probably in the neighbourhood of tens of millions of dollars. What specifically is this work going to accomplish? If the Minister can't give it to us now, it would be helpful to get that list and communicate that to the public, as well, because I have no idea

what we're actually approving here. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I know this is a particular project that involves collaboration between ENR, ITI, ECE, Health and Social Services, and MACA. Quite a number of departments have come together on this and are collaborating on their existing resources to advance this project. Some of this funding is, indeed, to secure additional staff between these departments so that there can be more dedicated resources to advancing some of the items that are contained within the action plan as it stands right now. I suppose a more detailed analysis of what each of these items will be related to those staffings, opportunities, we certainly can commit to providing that back to the Member. I hope that's at least somewhat helpful at this stage. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I want to be fair here. I support spending more on climate change, but without getting into the action plan itself, it is probably in the neighbourhood of about 50 pages. As I said, pages and pages and pages of action areas, potential partners, potential resources, but none of it is costed. This was a criticism of the action plan when it was being developed from SCEDE. We tried to encourage the Minister of the day to include some costing with some of this. Now we're being asked to approve \$1.4 million without knowing what it's going to be spent on. I want to invest more on climate change, but I have no idea what this is for. We haven't gotten any information about that. I think this has been, anyways, how much else can I say? With some of the other items, we get additional information, but on this one, we don't have anything. I want to see more money invested, but I think we just need to be a bit more careful in explaining what some of these line items are in the future, as well. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I actually asked Mr. Koe. I think it may not be very detailed. Some of it, we do, at least, have a list of the intended or expected activities in 2020-2021. If I could turn it over to him, please?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. Koe.

**MR. KOE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I do have a little bit of a list here that I can share with committee. ITI for their climate change framework, the activities that would be focused on in 2020-2021, ITI would focus on permafrost monitoring and modelling. That supports a number of departments to meet their mandate commitments. For ENR, climate monitoring to assist in understanding adaption needs. MACA would be working on community infrastructure, adaption, and planning; health on health-related adaption; ECE on archeological inventory and retention of vulnerable locations. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Mr. Koe. Did you have any further questions, Member for Frame Lake?

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. That's helpful. I'd like a little more information about specific activities and staffing that are going to be associated with each of the departments that were listed off there. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Any further questions, comments, under this section? Seeing none, environmental stewardship and climate change, not previously authorized, \$1,468,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Forest management, not previously authorized, \$3,998,000. Questions? Comments? Seeing none, forest management, not previously authorized, \$3,998,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Total department, not previously authorized, \$5,788,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** We'll turn to page 6. Committee, we will now consider the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs operations expenditures and proceed to the detail on page 6. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021, Executive and Indigenous Affairs, Indigenous and intergovernmental affairs, not previously authorized, \$300,000. Questions? Comments? Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

**MR. NORN:** Marsi cho, Madam Chair. I wonder, Madam Chair, what "expansion" means? I'm not quite clear what the definition of that is. Marsi cho.

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



**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This is as a result of the fact that there's been an increased number of meetings that are being called with more frequency across the Northwest Territories. In order to support full participation by the Indigenous governments, this amount is being increased in order to provide the funding to the Indigenous governments to support their participation in those meetings, in that increased number and variety of meetings. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. NORN:** Marsi cho, Madam Chair. I meant to say, Minister of Finance. My apologies. Thank you for the response, by the way. How does the pandemic affect these numbers? Are there going to be changes with this? Are there going to be changes in spending for this fiscal year? Marsi cho.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. One of the biggest areas where there is expected to be some changes -- well, I shouldn't say, one of the biggest areas. There are a lot of changes. One area of significant changes in terms of travel funding, obviously, there may well be a lot less travel occurring. That said, these are internal NWT Indigenous governments, so it may or may not affect how much travel is occurring. Short answer is: yes, but it's uncertain. I'm not in a position to say that it won't necessarily require the full \$300,000. We can certainly commit to providing updates as the next few months come forward and we start to see exactly what changes in demands there have been for travel funding. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. NORN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm hoping our government can help Lutselk'e in the Internet issues because, if the chief wants and the council want to communicate, it's going to be tough. I'll leave that as a comment. I'm glad that there's extra money allocated for this because it's important. Like I mentioned before, we sat at the roundtable, all the governments. We got together and sat together. There were a lot of concerns there, and I'm glad to see that we're actually showing some commitment there. Marsi cho.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. I'll take that as a comment. I will call the page again. Indigenous and intergovernmental affairs, not previously authorized, \$300,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Total department, not previously authorized, \$300,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** We'll now turn to page 7. Committee, we will now proceed with the Department of Finance, and we'll proceed to the detail on page 7. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021, Department of Finance, operations expenditures, management board secretariat, not previously authorized, \$36,840,000. Questions? Comments? Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm looking at the first line item to provide funding to respond to COVID, \$23,400,000. I understand all of this money is essentially flow through, offset by the Government of Canada. I just want to clarify. Is this all money we've essentially already spent or programs that have already been announced, or is this new money? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This is not new money at this point. This is money that's come in to date, and that has been provided, I believe, to the end of June. A mix of both planned and spent. I suppose it depends. If we're looking just at the first line item, the \$23 million, that is a mix of on the planned and spent items coming in based on best estimates at this point of what's happening with COVID-19. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, I guess my understanding is there are quite a bit of programs, and most of them are kind of all wrapped up in this money. We have spent it, or it's kind of already allocated. The big question is: is there more money expected to come? Do we have any plans to increase our COVID spending ourselves? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As a starting point, Madam Chair, the federal government just this week announced a further \$14 billion that they will be engaging all provinces and territories in order to determine the allocation of those different funds. I certainly am not in a position to say, right now, what proportion of

that the Northwest Territories will get, only that we certainly will get some share of that. The initial money that we received was, again, part of really an emergency response. Most provinces and territories, and indeed, the federal government, are still really quite in an emergency response stage, albeit it may be evolving. These projections and the money that was received was based, as I say, in fact, on projections on where we were at and where we would be. I'm sure there is more money coming from the federal government. As I say, there is the \$14 billion, but whether or not there will be more, I'm certainly not going to make any commitments on behalf of a different Minister and a different level of government. Will there need to be more money coming from the GNWT? "Probably" is probably the best I can say. It's just that at this point, how much? It is going to be difficult to estimate. Much of that depends on whether or not we wind up facing a second wave that is worse this fall or if it is less impactful and more mild, which certainly isn't the prediction right now from a lot of different corners. That will have a big impact on where we're at financially. I hope that's sufficient information. I see the Member still has some time, so there may be more questions coming. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. No. That's very helpful. I just wanted to clarify for the public's sake that, when this \$23 million shows up, it's largely money that we've already spent. Moving onto the next line item there, the \$8,700,000 for passenger airlines. When this was announced, it was said that it was kind of part 1 of negotiations, and there was a potential second half for our cargo airlines. A number of our airlines that supply our communities in the NWT are fundamental to our supply chain, and they were unable to access this money because they don't carry passengers. Can the Minister provide an update when we're going to see money for those airlines? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. The first round of funding was really directed and really driven at the large airlines that provide scheduled passenger services. We were able to use some flexibility and to receive some flexibility so that we could direct it at airlines more across the Northwest Territories, more broadly than just one or two, which is certainly beneficial and there is a breakdown that was provided to five different airlines. Now, negotiations have continued with Transport Canada regularly. There have been regular communications between the Department of Finance and, I believe, the

Department of Infrastructure, as well, regarding airlines. Also, at the Finance Ministers' table and, I believe, probably with the Premiers' table, as well, all three territories are saying that airlines are different up here and we need more than just the passenger airlines, that they really are essential services providing cargo and medical, et cetera.

With that said, the latest word that we've had from Transport Canada is that they will be taking some time and that the funding that will hopefully be coming from them is not necessarily imminent. I'm happy to be surprised and to be wrong if that's not the case, but right now, it's not imminent. It's coming but not imminent, and they're still doing quite a lot of work in order to determine how much they'll be able to provide. That said, we're working internally, as well, right now. It's our hope that we won't be waiting necessarily for the federal government, but that the Department of Finance and the GNWT will be able to take some steps to fill the gaps that we know exist right now for other airlines in the territories. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm frustrated to hear that Transport Canada is taking their time, and I'm happy to hear that we are considering filling those gaps. I think a number of the communities, if they lose those cargo airlines, we're putting food security and a number of supply chains at serious risk. Lastly, I wanted to go to the third item here, the \$4,740,000 for the \$18-an-hour wage top-up for a 16-week period. My understanding is that we probably haven't spent all this money yet and people have to apply through their employer to get it. Does this money expire? Is this program dependent on people accessing it? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. No, we haven't spent all of it yet. It does require an application process. I think we might have the up-to-date numbers available in terms of where we're at right now. If I could just check in, perhaps, with Mr. Courtoreille, he might have that available, or Mr. Koe, I'm not sure. Just to get a sense of an update as to what the total expenditures are to date. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. KOE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The latest statistics as of June 3<sup>rd</sup>, we've had 41 employers apply and 293 employees have qualified. We've granted about \$90,000 and kind of the average

monthly support for each employee is about \$215 under that program. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think we would all like to see at least everyone in the Northwest Territories making \$18 an hour. That's still well below a living wage for many of our communities. I recognize that there is some work to do. It's only \$215 average a month for an employee. That's not that much money to us, but it's a lot to them. I'm looking for: perhaps there is a way, as this program expires, that we can meet those employers in the middle and offer some sort of wage-incentive program, and they can offer a bit of a raise to their own employees. Really, I don't think anyone should be paying people less than \$18 an hour in the Northwest Territories. I recognize that is the reality for these workers. I'm hoping the Minister can give me a sense of whether we can use this current funding as a bit of leverage to get people closer to a living wage. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. There is one thing I would note is that this program is for individuals who work at least 30 hours per week. There are likely some individuals who are making less than this, who are at least closer to the minimum wage. A bit of conjecture here but they wouldn't qualify for this program if they're not working 30 hours a week. I would be cautious in assuming that this program is necessarily covering everyone who is making less than \$18 per hour and that those numbers might actually be quite different. We certainly do have some statistics, labour market statistics, on who makes what, what number of labourers do make less. That might be a good project for one of the committees to undertake if they are so interested or inclined. At this point, Madam Chair, I'm not going to be able to give much more of a commitment on that particular project. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Are there any further questions, comments under this section? Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** I just want to echo MLA Johnson's frustration with the lack of financial support for the small regional cargo airlines. My concern is that we're going to end up losing them, either to bankruptcy or to having them move South. I've heard that from a local airline in Hay River, one that actually wants to expand into the passenger side of things. I'm just wondering: I'd like to ask the Minister how close we are to actually providing

them some funding. It sounds like we're not going to see anything from the feds in the near future, so how close are we, as a government, in getting them a package out? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** I'm cautiously optimistic that it won't be very long, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I know when she says "not long" it's usually a week. Thank you, Madam Chair. That's all.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Any further questions? Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I did give the Minister a heads-up that I would ask her some questions about some of these matters. The line of \$23,400,000, that's to help cover some of our extraordinary costs related to the pandemic. Can the Minister tell us how much we've actually spent on self-isolation where we helped put up our residents, and in some cases, essential service workers, in hotels and pay for their meals and so on? What have we spent on that so far? Let's start with that. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The total costs, year to date, on self-isolation centres are \$1.2 million, and a breakdown is that the majority of that are in Yellowknife, \$535,000 or just over; a little over \$207,000 in Hay River; \$455,750 in Inuvik; and \$2,160 in Fort Smith. Madam Chair, I'm happy to provide that chart to the Member so he doesn't have to write down my numbers. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Maybe if you could send that off to all the Members, they might want that. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes. I think I got about three of the numbers down, so it would be great to get it in a table. Forgive me if this was said, but what are our projected costs? Well, we don't know when the pandemic is going to end, but has the department predicted any costs that might be associated into the future with self-isolation, supporting those individuals? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to know, I think I said "to date" on the chart. Those are numbers that are up to May 15<sup>th</sup>, so there obviously has been almost the better part of a month since then, but those are the numbers that we have collated to now. Again, only having had a few months, but we're at about \$1.1 million per month, on average, so if we use that as a projection, then we're looking at \$5.6 million to the end of September. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. The Minister is well prepared. I appreciate that. With regard to the uptake on the wage top-up program, I think there are about 2,100 people who might be eligible based on statistical tracking. What is the uptake like as of the most recent number the Minister can give us? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, Mr. Koe just said the number, but I didn't write it down. If I could ask it to go back to him, please?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. Koe.

**MR. KOE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The uptake for employees so far is 293 employees have been covered by 41 applications by their employers. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I've said this in a Member's statement and through questions on the floor: I hate to think that we're actually going to roll back people's wages at the end of this. This is just unconscionable, that we would actually do that, especially for low-income workers. I understand from previous responses from the Minister that there is a minimum wage review committee that has apparently been appointed and is going to report on this, but even if we find a way to increase the minimum wage, it's still probably not going to be anywhere close to a living wage. I think we need to move toward a guaranteed basic income. Those are my views on this, and I want to encourage my colleagues on the other side of the House to make that happen. I'm prepared to do work on it on this side of the House, talk to my colleagues, as well, but we have to work together to make sure that we can provide the residents who

are most in need with getting them out of poverty, quite frankly. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Did you have any further comments to that, Minister?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, I know the Member wasn't suggesting there was a question. I would note that this isn't a wage, Madam Chair. I agree that no one wants to roll back anything. There have been quite a number of initiatives that have rolled out in response to COVID that are having unintended benefits far and beyond the immediate stage of a crisis response, but this one in particular was really put in place by the federal government to make sure that no one in low-wage, often front-line work walked away from their job in the context of a crisis where they might perceive themselves to be at risk or perceive a fear or be otherwise struggling through what was a very unprecedented time. The future of this program, again with the federal government, is that it's not forever. Now, what might happen on their side, I can't say, but certainly from their end it was that this was not forever; this was meant to really cover the emergency stage of the pandemic. Beyond that, again, it will be up to them if there is some change in how they want to provide money and funding to the territories and provinces. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Did you have any further questions? Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I don't want to relive this debate. The fact is that this was targeted by the federal government to support essential service workers, but our government made a decision and then negotiated this with the federal government that all low-wage earners in the Northwest Territories should be eligible. I want to commend the Minister for doing that. That was the right thing to do. Anyway, we made the decision to broaden the application of what was a federal program intended for essential services to cover everybody here who gets a low income, to help them get through the pandemic, as well. Hat's off to the Minister for doing that. Let's fix this permanently and move people toward a living wage and end poverty in the Northwest Territories. That's what we should be doing. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. I will take that as a comment, a good comment, and we will move on. Are there any further questions or comments under this section? Management Board Secretariat, not previously authorized, \$36,840,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Total department, not previously authorized, \$36,840,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Turn to page 8. Committee, we will now consider the Department of Health and Social Services, operations expenditures, and we will proceed to the detail on page 8. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021, Department of Health and Social Services, operations expenditures administrative and support services, not previously authorized, \$405,000. Questions or comments? I will call it, then. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Could I have some plain language about what this money is going to be spent on? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That involves workforce planning, so this is initiatives that are recruitment- and retention-related. There are quite a number of projects in terms of, for example, Aurora College is involved in proposing to deliver personal support worker and practical nurse programs. There is risk messaging there, modification of that, and provision of that program. As well, Madam Chair, there would be additional staff training, in terms of being able to staff the new long-term care facilities that are being delivered across various communities in the Northwest Territories, and again, similarly, ensuring that there is training available to provide in-place positions for new health and social services workers as they are coming out of the Aurora College's programs. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. GREEN:** Nothing further, thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Any questions or comments? Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm just wondering if the Minister can please expand on the retention challenge as part of that piece. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. There are some options, including focusing on employee development programs so

that current employees are able to move forward and have better opportunities for advancement. Similarly, expanding the residency program again so that employees are better able to take advantage of having job-shadowing observerships and practicum, both focused in terms of then making the workplace one that is hopefully more satisfying and one that is more attractive to maintain and to keep workers in place. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Member. No further questions? All right. Administrative and support services, not previously authorized, \$405,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Health and social programs, \$8,413,000, not previously authorized. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm curious about the item for which there is money for meat inspections. I wasn't aware that there was any domesticated meat in the NWT, so maybe this is for something else. Could the Minister please give me a plain-language explanation? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As I understand it, this is an opportunity that might well provide the opportunity for there to be development of that industry by developing the regulations themselves. This is the opportunity to, as a starting point, create those regulations, create the policies and the processes associated, and then once those are in place, have available a training program so that there could potentially be, then, an industry that would support more locally produced, harvested foods. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you. I'm shocked that the government is working ahead on a non-existent industry to put regulations and policies into place. I thought that it worked the other way around; you had an industry that needed regulating, rather than creating regulations for something that doesn't exist. Maybe the Minister could explain that to me. I'm missing something. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This is to support a position with Health and Social Services where they can

undertake this project. There certainly are quite a number of harvesters in the Northwest Territories right now who are able to harvest food, but then aren't actually able to turn around and provide that to anyone outside of, perhaps, immediate family, lest they are contravening regulations and not meeting health and safety requirements. That's the target group here. It's meant to provide an opportunity to spread food around that is coming in, that exists already, and as such, to address food insecurity by making that resource available in a broader way. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. GREEN:** No, nothing further on this section. Thank you.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I guess I just want to say that, on the meat inspection issue, I know that the Northern Farm Training Institute does raise animals. I was there this past weekend. They are interested in trying to market some of that meat. They've tried to do it in Yellowknife at the farmers' market here, but they weren't able to do that. I visited another operation, potential operation, by Mr. Russell Chase, who would like to breed rabbits and sell them, but can't do it right now. We have to fix this issue in terms of building food security here, so I support this. I did want to ask questions about funding for Child and Family Services. It's almost \$3.7 million. I support this, but I'm just a bit concerned about how we're going to roll this out in COVID pandemic times because I think some of this would normally result in hiring and training extra staff to take on some of the work. This is largely in response to the Office of the Auditor General's review of Child and Family Services, so have we considered how this is going to roll out during the pandemic? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to put a number to it, this is funding that will support 20 positions, including significant front-line positions as well as support staff to help ensure that the front-line workers aren't doing their own background administrative supports as well as support to develop cultural safety and curriculum development. As far as the recruitment, Madam Chair, part of the problem was just in the process. The authorities have developed a human resources recruitment and retention plan, and that is expected to make the process of recruiting and retaining staff more streamlined, and as they are going through that process, implementing that

process, implementing an ongoing centralized process for hiring for Child and Family Services, I can report that they have reduced vacancies from a 25-percent vacancy down to a 6.3-percent vacancy, and that number includes a drop that has consistently remained, even between January and May, we went from 7.6-percent vacancy down to 6.3-percent vacancy, between January and May. I don't have the social background on why that might be or the psychological background on why that might be, but I am happy to say that that does seem to be the trend that we're experiencing right now. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. The Minister is full of good news today, and that is sincerely good news. I appreciate the work on that, and I do want this money to be well-used. The next line item is \$2.6 million. This is for continuing to roll out the child and youth counsellor program. I think the Deh Cho has already been done, if I remember correctly, and I think it might be the Tlicho region. Now it's Yellowknife's turn, which is good, but I've heard some concerns here because some of the Yellowknife schools already had some individuals doing some of these functions. There was some concern that there were delays in implementing and rolling this out and so on. Can the Minister tell us what she's heard, and how this is going to roll out during the pandemic, as well? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. Just to give a bit of very brief context, it looks like we have a bit of extra time, 2018-2019 saw the establishment in the Tlicho and Deh Cho regions; 2019-2020 saw a rollout to the Sahtu and the Beaufort-Delta; and now, 2020-2021, we are expecting or assuming, if there is approval, rather, it would go to Yellowknife. As far as the Member is mentioning the concern that I acknowledge exists around security for staff who were already doing some of this work in some of the schools and some of the school districts, I can say that there is a priority right now within hiring for these positions. The hope being that, if that does get priorities for immediate action, that will decrease any lingering uncertainty that might be still experienced by those staff members wondering what is happening for the upcoming year. Hopefully, with the year being a bit uncertain, there are some backup plans within NTHSSA that if, in fact, there may need to be more positions filled, depending, that we can, then they can then do that, and they would have a backup plan for coverage. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. One of my questions was asked so I'm just going to keep moving down the line item to the \$2.6 million for mental health and wellness counselling. I would just like confirmation if that is the child and youth care counsellors. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Sorry. The \$2.616 million. Sorry, Madam Chair. I am trying to read too many notes at the same time. Yes, that is the child and youth care counsellors, Madam Chair. Thank you.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. My last question is just in regard to the very last line item for Alcoholics Anonymous and Wellbriety. I just want to confirm that that is program funding that is offered in all communities and not just Yellowknife.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, I'm not sure if it's offered in all communities. Let me see if I can get a number that will perhaps break that down a little bit further as to what communities that is being offered in. Madam Chair, beginning in 2020-2021, there is support that is expected to be available in 15 communities. This is meant to provide the community training for five communities in the first two years and then to go from there, reducing over time. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Kam Lake, did you have any further questions? Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

**MR. NORN:** Marsi cho, Madam Chair. The Member for Kam Lake already asked some of the questions I had for the mental health, so thank you for that. I do know that, for mental health and wellness, it's so important for these monies to be allocated the way they are. We still have lots of people who are suffering. We have kids helpline. We have residential helplines and stuff. I'm just wondering right now how this is going to be allocated in terms of are there going to be helplines? Is this going to go towards helplines in the North?

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I assume we're still talking about the \$280,000. With respect to that particular item, I don't have any information that helplines, in particular, have been targeted for funding through this program. Rather, again, that it is meant to support the meeting costs within certain 15 communities as well as some community training so that they can be better placed to provide those group meeting settings. I don't have any information about any helpline funding specifically. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. NORN:** [Microphone turned off] ...Madam Chair. For me, like I said, this kind of hits home for me. I've lost a couple of uncles to suicide and stuff like that. I wish we had these back then, but we didn't. We do now, which is really good. It's good to see some of these proactive measures taking place. I'd just like to know how much overlap would be, say, with residential healing. They have a lot of helplines and monies being allocated through Health Canada. I know that's being put in place. I'm just wondering how much funding is being put into these programs from the federal government and how much help are we getting from the government for these programs?

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, this \$280,000 specifically is entirely GNWT funded. That certainly isn't to say that there is not funding that is already existing within the Health and Social Services system for mental health that is from the federal government. I don't know that I would have all of that here available in front of me, but I can certainly convey to the Minister of Health and Social Services that we might want a bit more information on that exact issue. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Did you have more questions? No? Member for Kam Lake, since you didn't use up all your time.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you for letting me double dip, Madam Chair. I'm wondering if the Minister can please provide just an outline of what recommendations they plan to be able to implement from the healthy families program for the \$600,000? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The intended actions that would flow from this money are expected to include the

development of a Healthy Family Program framework and implementation plan, which will include a made-in-the-North curriculum, so Northwest Territories focused quite specifically. As well, Madam Chair, expanding the Healthy Family Program and Early Childhood Intervention Program so that there are five additional communities who will now benefit from that program. That will hopefully be happening over the next four years, including three regional coordinator positions. Finally, that the new curriculum, of course, we'll need to provide training. Once that new curriculum is in place this will also support establishing training for staff who are working with child and families in those communities. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Kam Lake, anything further?

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Just one final question, I promise. The Minister mentioned that there would be now be five additional communities that this would be expanded to. What is the total number of communities that this is present in? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, we were just conferring on this side, and we think it may actually only be in Yellowknife at the present moment. If I'm wrong, Madam Chair, I will correct myself in due course. I think right now it's actually still just only in Yellowknife or possibly Inuvik, too.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. All right, do we have any further questions, comments under this section? Health and social programs, not previously authorized, \$8,413,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** [Microphone turned off] ...we started with quorum, we still have quorum. [Microphone turned off] ...as long as we start with quorum. Long term and continuing care services, \$7,391,000, not previously authorized. Questions? comments? No questions, comments. Long term and continuing care services, not previously authorized, \$7,391,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Total department, \$16,209,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, committee. We will now turn to page 9. We are now

considering the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, operations expenditures, and will proceed to the detail on this page. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021, Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, operations expenditures, activity, economic diversification and business support, not previously authorized, \$450,000. Questions? Comments? Seeing none. Economic diversification and business support, not previously authorized, \$450,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBER:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Minerals and petroleum resources, not previously authorized, \$360,000. Questions? Comments? Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Can I just get a little bit of an explanation of what the \$360,000 is going to be used for here? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This is being utilized to help develop the comprehensive regulations that are required under the new Mineral Resources Act that received assent right at the tail end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly. The regulations are fairly extensive and complex, and this is meant to support having individuals and staffing available to complete that work over at ITI. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes, I agree with the Minister that there's a lot of work that needs to be done here, and there are a lot of matters of public interest, including royalties and so on. I'm just kind of curious, though, why ITI gets to go back to the well, and other departments that dealt with post-devo legislation like ENR, there's a new Protected Areas Act, Environmental Rights Act. They're still working on a Forest Act, minutes of the Environmental Protection Act, the Waters Act. Why that department, in particular -- and even the Department of Lands, they've got the Public Lands Act. It's going to require a lot of work to develop regulations. Why are we not seeing anything in the supplementary appropriation for these other departments doing this work? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to pull back the veil a little bit on



the process. Departments are expected to look internally and to determine whether or not they can utilize their existing resources, both in terms of actual structural resources and staffing resources before coming forward to seek additional funding, or seek the creation of additional positions. In this case, if they do come forward, then certainly an analysis is done by the Management Board Secretariat to confirm whether or not, in fact, what is being requested is really what is required. In this particular instance, ENR, Lands were able to look internally and establish that their staffing was a sufficient complement to achieve the work that they have to do on their side. Industry, Tourism and Investment did not have that ability within, so they are seeking some additional funding in order to undertake their portion of the work. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I lived through the development of a number of these bills in the last Assembly. Some of my colleagues in this House survived that as well, and I don't want to go back to that where a bunch of bills or regulations come on us all at the same time without sufficient resources to the public. I'm already aware that there's a number of NGOs, Indigenous governments, as well, that have, in the past, talked about the need for more resources to engage in these sorts of co-drafting processes. I see ITI coming to the well, that's great. I'm glad ITI's doing that, but I'm concerned about the capacity of the other departments. The Minister is sitting here and listening to this. I don't want to have to go through that again. Indigenous governments shouldn't have to go through that again, nor should the public in terms of ensuring that everybody has the resources to get the job done. I want to encourage the other Ministers that have responsibility around post-devolution legislative development and development of regulations to get the resources to get the job done and do it right. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance, did you have any? Any further questions, comments, under minerals and petroleum resources? Minerals and petroleum resources, not previously authorized, \$360,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Total department, not previously authorized, \$810,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, committee. We will move onto page 10. We will now consider the Department of Justice, operations expenditures, with the detail on this page. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021, Justice, operations expenditures, services to government, not previously authorized, a reduction of \$339,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Can I just get an explanation of what this reduction is? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. There is the project underway right now for unauthorized and rights-based occupancy proceeding through the Department of Lands. In order to support that work, Department of Justice had put forward that they estimated requiring three additional legal counsel. After further discussion, it was agreed that, perhaps, a phased approach to the unauthorized occupancy and rights-based occupancy initiative is more appropriate. As such, we'll start off with one legal counsel, and see how the needs may evolve. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Any further questions? Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess I'm always happy to see two less lawyers in the world. I have a little caution here to using lawyers on a rights-based occupancy dealing with unauthorized uses. We're essentially dealing with squatters. I know that we have to do a lot of work, and I'm very excited to see the Department of Lands make some progress on this. I would just offer some caution to the Minister of Justice and the Department of Lands that, perhaps, lawyers and the court process are not always the best way to go about doing this, and I think some mediation, some alternative dispute resolution. There's probably some processes that we could design, and I would encourage this one position to look into some alternative dispute resolution processes as we go through the process of catching up on about 40 years of squatting. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, I'll pass that onto the Minister of Justice. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Any further questions? Services to government, not previously authorized, a reduction of \$339,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Total department, not previously authorized, a reduction of \$339,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, committee. We will move onto page 11. We will now consider the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, operations expenditures. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021, Municipal and Community Affairs, operations expenditures, regional operations, not previously authorized, \$2,793,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Two point five million dollars to increase funding to municipal governments. One of our mandate commitments is to reduce the municipal funding gap. Can I just clarify whether this money is specifically in regards to funding for the municipal funding gap, and where this gets us in reducing that overall? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This funding will be allocated based on the established funding formula that is already in existence, and so, as such, it will be divided accordingly and take a piece away from the funding gap that exists for all of those from the funding gap or from the formulas identifying a gap. I don't have the specific number by community, but I can provide that detail if that is what the Member is looking for. Thank you.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. I would like to see a bit more of, I know this is in the mandate and I know this is MACA, but a bit more of a costed plan of how much this actually reduces the funding gap by. I know we're quite a few million dollars short, and I also think when we do some of our hazard mapping and permafrost mapping from the climate change framework, we're going to see the cost of municipal infrastructure increase even

more. It's somewhat a losing battle that I think we, as a territory, really have to prioritize. I'd like to hear a commitment from the Minister that we will get a little bit more of a breakdown of how, every time we throw a few million dollars at the municipal funding gap, we are actually closing it? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. "Throwing money at," that's totally the wrong term, but putting money in towards communities isn't just a matter of putting it into a bank account. Those communities are using that money to provide services: water and sewer services, for instance; waste services, for instance; other infrastructure. There's no doubt that needs always continue to grow, but every time that there's an investment made in the communities, it supports the fact that there's a gap in terms of the program services and infrastructure available in those communities. I suspect, Madam Chair, that it is going to be a complicated calculation in that, for some, an investment will support a gap that exists right now at a real point in time, and for others, yes, they will be experiencing climate change more severely than in other communities. Essentially, the gap, in some ways, one might say is growing, and others might say is actually reduced by an investment, by a greater percentage or proportion.

This is not an easy conversation, Madam Chair, but the commitment is there. It's in the mandate, and based on what's in the mandate, that is what this money is going towards. I can definitely provide the breakdown based on what we have all agreed, as the 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly, is a priority and then what was presented as being the mandate items, how the funding here is going to achieve those goals. I just want to caution that, in terms of saying community by community, what's their individual gap and where are they each at, that will probably continue to be a moving target over time. I just wanted to make a note of caution in terms of what we can provide. We will provide what this money is doing to the gap as it is found in the mandate right now. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I do want to commend the Minister and my friends in Cabinet for finding money to invest in this mandate item. This is good. I served on city council, so I know that municipal governments make good use of this money. What I want to get some assurance of is that there is actually someone or some way of tracking what the municipal funding gap actually is. That was done, I think, in the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly. There

was a task force between MACA and NWTAC, representation from different kinds of communities, small regional centres, and Yellowknife. They worked together on rejigging the way that funds should be allocated to municipal governments based on need. It was a great piece of work done collaboratively, and a moment in time, the municipal funding gap was identified. Is that work being kept up to date? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe that MACA is, in fact, keeping those numbers. Well, MACA can keep track of those numbers, Madam Chair, but I don't have the tracking right in front of me right now. I think that there is certainly an intention, at least in the Department of Finance, to the extent that there is a tracking of all of the public monies that are spent, to ensure that there is tracking, to ensure that the money that is being spent is being spent appropriately, wisely, and having the effects that we want it to have. I know that we have increased our capacity in the Department of Finance to do exactly that kind of work and make sure that, in fact, money is going where it needs to go and having the effects that it wants to have. I am certainly not going to commit the Minister of MACA to do one thing or another, but there can be monitoring. I think I would go so far as to commit that there will be monitoring somewhere, Madam Chair. Thank you.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. While I have the MACA Minister's ears, I am going to suggest a couple of things here. What we need is an annual update of what that municipal funding gap is. It should be reported publicly so that we know what that is. It should be given to NWTAC, as well. If we have made a commitment together, as a priority, and Cabinet is willing to work on this, of closing that gap, we need a plan to do that. I know that things keep changing with COVID and all the rest, but we need to have a plan for how we think we are going to invest in that municipal funding gap for the rest of this term. Anyways, there are a couple of ideas that I want to plant in the Minister's ears, some kind of regular reporting, updating of that funding gap on an annual basis. If she can develop a plan for how we are going to deal with it as best that we can for the remainder of the term, that would be great. I will leave it at that. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Any further questions or comments under the regional operations? Seeing

none, regional operations, not previously authorized, \$2,793,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Sports, recreation, and youth, not previously authorized, \$650,000. Does committee agree? Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I just wish I had the encyclopedic knowledge of my colleague, the honourable Member for Nahendeh, because he was passionate about this in the last Assembly. I sat next to him, so a little bit of it rubbed off on me. This is an interesting line item because we took the money out of the MACA budget, or some people agreed to take the money out of the MACA budget. I will put it at that. Now it's being put back in, where it should have been left to support these activities. Can I get an explanation as to why it's going back at this point? Is this a permanent increase over time, or is this just a one-shot deal to support our youth and recreation? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am not as well-versed to speak to the ins and outs of what went out in the last round of negotiations in a prior Assembly. I can say that this \$650,000 is intended to be a temporary offset because of reduced revenues in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 in Western Canadian Lotteries, which are a significant source of revenue for multisport funding within MACA. That reduction in revenue was resultant from lower lottery purchases than usual, which, in turn, was the result, at least in part, of a fairly significant network outage such that there simply was no ability to have sales of lotteries. That reduced the revenue by a significant margin. As such, there was a funding shortage, and so there is this money that has come forward here as far as being \$650,000. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Thanks to the Minister for that. I am a bit disappointed to hear that this is just a one-time injection of cash. I guess we just have to revisit this in the next budget. Is that the way that this is going to get handled? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. There are some preliminary estimates that suggest that, in part, and this is maybe one of those moments of a small silver

lining. When the Arctic Winter Games were cancelled quite unfortunately, there were, of course, as a result, some savings in terms of costs. Right now, a preliminary estimate is that it may well have been \$450,000. That certainly helps to stabilize this fund. Again, similarly, if lottery ticket purchases also were to return and stabilize, then that should also reduce the reduction, increase the revenues that are going into this fund. With those two things, there may not be the same need to inject, sort of, a life raft into the funding. If that is the case, then there will be no need to increase this. Obviously, we will continue to monitor the fund and ensure that it is in stable condition. I believe that MACA does have a number of efforts under way to do exactly that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I guess I will just go on record that I am concerned about the state of this fund, hearing that people are buying less lottery tickets than we had projected, and it's probably not going to get any better for a while. I know that there is going to be some annual reporting now, as a result of changes that I pushed in the last Assembly to get public reporting of this fund on an annual basis by the MACA Minister. I am going to be watching this carefully. What I don't want to see happen, though, is that we reduce the level of support for our youth in sports in the Northwest Territories. That is going to be particularly important in the post-pandemic world. Right now, we can't get out to do a lot of these things, so maybe there is not as much draw or demand for this, but there is going to be a lot of pent-up demand for people to get out and start doing things again pretty quick. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Are there any further questions or comments under this section? Seeing none, sports, recreation, and youth, not previously authorized, \$650,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Total department, not previously authorized, \$3,443,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** All right. Thank you, committee. Do you agree that you have concluded consideration of Tabled Document 137-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures) No. 1, 2020-2021?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Ministers, and thank you to the witnesses for appearing before us. Sergeant-at-Arms, you may escort the witnesses from the Chamber. Does committee agree that this concludes consideration of Tabled Document 137-19(2)?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Mr. Norn.

COMMITTEE MOTION 16-19(2):  
CONCURRENCE MOTION – Tabled  
DOCUMENT 137-19(2): SUPPLEMENTARY  
ESTIMATES (OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES),  
NO. 1, 2020-2021,  
CARRIED

**MR. NORN:** Marsi cho, Madam Chair. I move that consideration of Tabled Document 137-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021, be now concluded and that Tabled Document 137-19(2) be reported and recommended as ready for further consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. Marsi cho, Madam Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Tabled Document 137-19(2) will be reported as ready for consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. Mr. Norn.

**MR. NORN:** Madam Chair, I move that we rise and report progress.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** There is a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

**MR. SPEAKER:** May I have the report of the Committee of the Whole, please. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

### Report of the Committee of the Whole

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Tabled Document

130-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 2, 2020-2021, and Tabled Document 137-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021, and would like report progress, with two motions adopted, that consideration of Tabled Documents 130-19(2) and 137-19(2) is concluded and that the House concur on those estimates, and that an appropriation bill to be based thereon be introduced without delay. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

---Carried

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

### Orders of the Day

**DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Thursday, June 11, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. 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 11-19(2), Creation of a Northwest Territories Elders' Strategy
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 1-19(2), Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment Report on Long-Term Post-Pandemic Recovery: Recommendations to the GNWT
- Committee Report 2-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on Long-Term Post-Pandemic Recovery: Recommendations to the GNWT
- Committee Report 3-19(2), Standing Committee on Social Development 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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Thursday, June 11, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

