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The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Members of the Legislative Assembly

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Friday, March 13, 2020****Members Present**

Mr. Blake, Mr. Bonnetrouge, Ms. Cleveland, Ms. Chinna, Ms. Cochrane, Ms Green, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Martselos, Ms. Nokleby, Mr. Norn, Mr. O'Reilly, Ms. Semmler, Mr. R.J. Simpson, Mr. Rocky Simpson, Ms. Thom, Mr. Thompson, Ms. Wawzonek

The House met at 10:00 a.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr): Colleagues, pursuant to Motion 6-19(2), I hereby give notice that I will recall this House to sit on Monday, March 16, 2020, at 10:00 a.m. After consultation with the Executive Council and Members of the Legislative Assembly, I am satisfied that the public interest requires that the House meet earlier than the scheduled resumption of the House on March 24, 2020.

In light of the growing concern surrounding COVID-19, I believe it is in the public interest for Members of this House to consider and adopt an interim appropriation bill to approve routine government expenditures for the first three months of the 2020-2021 fiscal year. Sessions of the Legislative Assembly require the support of substantial Cabinet and public service resources and the suspension of our current sitting will free up these resources to focus on preparing for and responding to the potential spread of COVID-19 to the Northwest Territories.

Colleagues, the adoption of an interim budget is normal in the fiscal year following an election. The consideration and adoption of an interim appropriation bill will provide the spending authority for government departments and agencies to continue normal operations during the first quarter. This will not preclude further consideration of the main estimates that are currently before this House. Consideration of those estimates will resume when the Legislative Assembly reconvenes in May. Thank you. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 37-19(2):
RENDEZ-VOUS DE LA FRANCOPHONIE

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Monsieur le President, I am proud to celebrate the francophone community of the Northwest Territories during the 22nd Annual Rendez-vous de la Francophonie. This nationwide

initiative, held every March, is an opportunity for Canada's 9.5 million French speakers to promote the French language and celebrate the many ways it is expressed throughout the country.

The Rendez-vous encourages us to celebrate the strength in our diversity and cooperatively address the challenges we face as a territory. This year's theme of "Au centre d'un changement" is especially relevant as we begin the work to achieve the priorities of the 19th Legislative Assembly. It is a welcome reminder to embrace a spirit of unity aimed at improving the quality of life for all of our residents.

Monsieur le President, this government is committed to providing our French-speaking residents with quality public services and communications. That is why we launched our first annual Francophone Community Satisfaction Survey earlier this month. The survey, available on the Department of Education, Culture and Employment's website until March 31, 2020, will help us to determine the francophone community's level of awareness of the GNWT's French-language communications and how satisfied they are with those services.

We are partnering with francophone organizations in areas like immigration. During Francophone Immigration Week in 2019, the Government of the Northwest Territories launched the Welcome to the NWT resource book for newcomers at an event hosted by the Northwest Territories' francophone immigration network. This guide was designed to help attract, settle, and ensure the retention of foreign nationals to the Northwest Territories and connect newcomers with the services and resources they need to settle comfortably into their new home communities.

We continue to support and engage with College nordique francophone. College nordique francophone plays a significant role in ensuring diversity in the postsecondary education system, offering language courses and a variety of post-secondary education diploma programs in cooperation with southern institutions. To support this important work, we recently signed a new three-year contribution agreement with College

nordique francophone that will begin in the new fiscal year.

Monsieur le President, our diverse French population contributes a cultural richness to our communities, not only through language, but through dance, art, food, film, music, ideas, love for the land, and, above all, a passion for interconnectedness and cultural exchange. I am grateful for the gifts we continue to receive from the members of our vibrant and growing francophone population. Let us continue to work together to celebrate our diversity and to strengthen the social, cultural, and economic landscape of the Northwest Territories. Merci, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Monfwi.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES REGIONAL OFFICE IN BEHCHOKO

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] Today, on behalf of Behchoko, I am going to be talking about some of the emotions about the Behchoko. There are more houses. There is a huge population in the community of the Behchoko. It is one of the largest native communities in the Northwest Territories. I am talking about the regional office. I will be talking about the regional office. I will ask questions, Mr. Speaker. [Translation ends]

[Microphone turned off] ...town in the Northwest Territories. It is the territory's largest Indigenous community. It is the centre of one of the most dynamic and vibrant regions in the territory. Yet, Mr. Speaker, the territorial government has no regional offices in Behchoko. It maintains regional offices in Inuvik, Norman Wells, Hay River, Fort Simpson, and Fort Smith, two of which actually have fewer population than Behchoko. Meanwhile, the Behchoko regional office is located in Yellowknife.

This is a disservice to the people of the Tlicho region. They observe Norman Wells and Fort Simpson, and wonder why they don't have the same access or decision-making powers, programs, employment, and career development as those communities that enjoy it by virtue of their regional government offices.

Mr. Speaker, the regional delivery model brings government closer to the people. It makes programs, policies, and services more culturally sensitive. The regional delivery model builds public buy-ins and makes communities more self-reliant. It has been 17 years since the Tlicho agreement was

signed, making the Tlicho Nation one of the most progressive self-governing Indigenous nations in the world. It is time that this territorial government is recognized by giving the Tlicho a regional government presence to match. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Premier at the appropriate time. Masi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CORRECTIONS ACT IMPLEMENTATION

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. In the last of the week of statements on justice issues, I want to reflect on the journey of developing the new Corrections Act. This was a journey I took with the Standing Committee on Social Development last year. Mr. Speaker, the committee was dismayed by the bill presented. It didn't reflect the many changes in approach and practice since the original Corrections Act came into force more than 40 years ago. It didn't compare well to new legislation in other jurisdictions such as Nunavut, which provided for more rehabilitation and re-integration of offenders. As well, the bill didn't reflect changes in case law around solitary confinement or provide for procedural fairness with the complaints process. Last but not least, too many issues that are rights-based were relegated to regulations and policies rather than being found in the bill itself.

I reached out to subject-matter experts, and we benefited from the advice from the BC Civil Liberties Association; the former Director General of Corrections for Canada; the Canadian Bar Association, NWT Chapter; the former ED of the John Howard Society; and the Information and Privacy Commissioner. With all this analysis, we were able to refocus the bill away from administration of corrections and make it more inmate-centric, so to speak. We looked at how we take care of inmates when they are in one of our correctional centres and how we can assist them in turning their lives around so there is hope for a better future.

It was really beneficial that the Minister of Justice in the last Assembly and his staff worked so well together with the standing committee and our staff to accomplish very extensive and useful changes to the bill. The new NWT Corrections Act is equivalent to corrections acts anywhere in the country. This process demonstrated the strengths of consensus government. I used to say to people while this was going on that this was the bill that kept me up at night. After waiting 43 years for it to be thoroughly overhauled, we needed to do a really good job so that it would last another 43 years. While I was initially doubtful that could be done, it was done. I

am very proud of the result. I will have questions for the Minister of Justice on the next step, implementation of the act. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COVID-19 AND SPRING BREAK

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased. Yesterday, we brought up the COVID-19. I am pleased this government is working so hard to get this pandemic for the people across the territories sorted out on a plan to go forward. I want to know this plan for our schools, Mr. Speaker, and our small communities. Yesterday, Ontario announced the unprecedented decision to shut down their schools for two weeks after their spring break to try to slow the spread of the virus.

I believe the Minister of ECE should be doing the same here, Mr. Speaker, across our territory. In every district, give the local DEAs the authority to shut our schools down for the teachers. Everybody has a timeline when their spring break ends. The day it ends, it should be shut down for two weeks for self-isolation, because we know all the teachers in Nunakput where I represent, Inuvik, all the Beaufort-Delta, took off that day south. This will give our teachers who travelled south a chance to get back to our communities, self-isolate for a two weeks' extended period, with pay. I also want to know if the school staff will be making sure that their school staff is paid regardless if they are self-isolating or not.

Today, I am asking the Minister of ECE: is he planning to extend spring break across the territory, say, Yellowknife, South Slave, Nunakput, Mackenzie Delta, the day that they come back, two weeks after they get back in the community to self-isolate and shut down our schools for the safety of our kids? Because, in the communities, we don't have access to medical like they do down south, Mr. Speaker. Make sure the Minister of education gives our local DEAs the authority to do that and let it be their choice in the matter. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you Member for Nunakput. Members' statements. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COVID-19 AND SPRING BREAK

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think my colleague and I sat down and wrote our Member's statements together. Spring break is a time for families and teachers to escape the cold,

dark weather for a couple of weeks. The spring break in my community started March 6th; therefore, everyone should start returning from their vacations from all over Canada and the rest of the countries by next weekend. This has people concerned. In other provinces, they are taking precautions by way of closing down schools for an additional two weeks after the spring break to reduce the possible spread of the virus.

Mr. Speaker, we have to remember there is no vaccine for this virus. There are people who are healthy and will risk being sick and do not mind taking the chance, but what happens, Mr. Speaker, to those who are immunocompromised, like our elders, our babies, and those with chronic diseases? Inuvik is the hub for all travel back to the smaller communities, and, therefore, we need to have a plan for when everyone returns to the Beaufort-Delta. In light of the rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus, my community is worried about what will happen if the families and teachers return with no plan. We also have no relief healthcare staff in Inuvik, and, therefore, if we get hit with the virus in my community or one of the smaller outlying communities in the Beaufort-Delta, they will deplete the staff in my community. We need to have a plan. We need to have the resources to protect the people in my community and the rest of the NWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will have questions for the Minister of ECE. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SUPPORT FOR SHORTER SITTING

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to rise in support of your decision to end this session early and pass an interim appropriation bill. I had a number of concerns about taking up the department of health's time, and all of the senior management, in questioning them over their budget while they have much better things to do.

I just wanted to speak briefly on this COVID-19 thing. I think the main priorities here are continuity of government and protecting our most vulnerable people, Mr. Speaker. I would like to commend all of the departments on the work they are doing, even without a confirmed case in the NWT as of yet. I've seen departmental response plans, and I have seen people really kick into action, just the power of what government can do. I think it's important here to reassure citizens that it's a matter of preparation, not panic.

I would like to in advance just provide some of my suggestions to Ministers that I will continue to press them, even without the House sitting. I think we

must protect our most vulnerable. If we have a full-blown pandemic in the Northwest Territories, I would like to see the Housing Corporation stop evicting people. I think the idea that we would put people in self-isolation and then evict them is inhumane. I would like to see the Power Corporation stop throttling power on people who are self-isolating, Mr. Speaker. I would like to see our homeless and most vulnerable provided housing if they have to self-isolate. I would like to see those in corrections make sure that they can be protected in this.

Mr. Speaker, during this time, even though this Assembly is not sitting, I want to assure the public that all MLAs will be in contact with government and that we will be continuing to have open communication with all of our citizens. Most importantly, this is about making sure that our healthcare system is prepared and not overwhelmed, and so I would like to in advance thank all of our healthcare workers, who are already overworked. Things are going to be harder for them, but I know that we are all there behind them, all of our healthcare workers, and so I just want to thank everyone in advance. Let's get through this together. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON DREDGING IN HAY RIVER

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With permission from the Member for Hay River North, I am going to use a good part of a previous statement he made on dredging.

Mr. Speaker, the build-up of sediments in the Port of Hay River has reached a critical level. The federal government used to dredge the waterways around Hay River and at points in the Mackenzie River. That program ended in the early 1990s, and virtually nothing has been done since. The result is that tugs are dragging barges through silt, boats are being damaged, and sport and commercial fishermen are finding it unsafe. I am aware that dredging is the federal government's responsibility as that has been the answer that previous Ministers have provided over and over again. Regardless of whose responsibility it is, it is in our backyard, so, as far as I am concerned, it's our problem and we have to do something about it.

Mr. Speaker, safe marine operating conditions are vital to maintaining and growing the South Slave economy. The Port of Hay River is the largest inland port in Western Canada. It is home to a Canadian Coast Guard base, the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and our own

marine transportation service. It is part of the reason that the Town of Hay River exists, so it's shocking that we have let this condition worsen each year.

Our priorities contain a bold vision for the NWT's economy, which includes the fishing industry. The problem is that, if the fishermen cannot get to the fish because the port is too shallow and unsafe, then we do not have an industry. It's as simple as that. Hay River has also a growing tourist industry with amazing potential. With our southern proximity and access, the town could be a destination for recreational boaters and sport fishers, and, in fact, there are businesses making investments in the market right now. Mr. Speaker, without action on dredging, that opportunity will be lost.

The vitality of our shipping industry and the cost of goods up the Mackenzie are also directly and negatively impacted by our lack of action. This problem has consequences beyond Hay River. As each year passes and the sediment builds, the risk of flooding grows greater. From what I could tell, the previous government did little more than provide a weak argument to the federal government to dredge the harbour, which has gotten us nowhere. I urge this government to address the dredging issue during the term of this Assembly. What we need is more action and less finger-pointing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Members' statements. Item 9, returns to oral questions. Okay, colleagues, I will go back to Members' statements, but please put up your hand so that we mark you down. We will carry on with the Member for Thebacha.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EULOGY FOR BETTY MASON

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry because I thought I had to be last because part of my Member's statement is a eulogy. Okay. Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight the Wood Buffalo National Park today. This park was established 98 years ago to protect the declining number of wood bison. It is approximately 45,000 square kilometres and is the largest park in Canada and the second-largest park in the world. It is listed as a UNESCO heritage site. According to the UNESCO website, "UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It seeks to build peace through international cooperation in education, the sciences and culture. UNESCO's programs contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals defined in Agenda 2030, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015." UNESCO has approximately 1,100 heritage sites worldwide, with

20 being in Canada, one of which is the Wood Buffalo National Park.

Mr. Speaker, Fort Smith is called "the gateway to Wood Buffalo National Park." Every year, tourists arrive to visit this park. Numbers of visitors have increased over the years, from approximately 1,600 to 3,900 in 2019.

The Wood Buffalo National Park offers a variety of experiences to tourists, including:

1. a Dark Sky Festival that takes place every August; in 2013 the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada designated the Wood Buffalo National Park as the world's largest dark-sky preserve;
2. two wetland sites that are considered of international significance, one of which is the nesting grounds of the whooping crane and the other being the Peace-Athabasca Delta. Both provide important wetlands for migrating and nesting fowl;
3. snake pits that offer viewers to see garter snakes migrate from wintering caves;
4. hiking trails that offer a variety of unique landscapes;
5. off-the-grid camping experiences; and
6. salt plains created by ancient seas.

Mr. Speaker, this heritage site is accessible through Fort Smith and is a hidden gem and could easily be promoted as an incredible tourist destination for the NWT. I encourage everyone to check out this wonderful park at some point in their travels, either in Fort Smith or anywhere in the Northwest Territories. Furthermore, I would like to wish all of the staff at the Wood Buffalo National Park office a great weekend and for all of my constituents of Fort Smith to have an enjoyable weekend at the Wood Buffalo Frolics Festival. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to finish my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted.

MS. MARTSELOS: Lastly, Mr. Speaker, the town of Fort Smith is saddened by the passing of Mrs. Betty Mason. Betty was well known for the years she worked at the town hall, including when my husband Peter was mayor. Betty was a huge presence in the community, and, after retiring from the town office, she worked at Kaeser's Stores, where everyone was greeted with a smile and a laugh. Betty was well known for her great sense of humour, and everyone was a target of teasing, no matter who you were.

Betty was loved by all and will be sadly missed by her St. John's Anglican Church family and the town

of Fort Smith. I would like to offer my sincere condolences to her daughter, Linda, and her grandson, Carson, and all of her extended Fort Smith family. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MINERAL RESOURCES

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. The review of the Mineral Resources Act involved a four-and-a-half-hour clause-by-clause review and six hours in Committee of the Whole. To say it was contentious would be a huge understatement.

The Mineral Resources Act is not about promoting mining. It's about setting up a system for mineral rights management. The bill was supposed to be about trying to balance a complex set of rights and interests. Significant improvements included notice to Indigenous governments of mining claims and exploration work. There may be requirements for benefit agreements with Indigenous governments before a mine can go under production. Regular MLAs worked very hard to get some further improvements, but many were rejected.

The bill failed to recognize the legitimate interests of community governments in protecting their lands and infrastructure. There is no precision or clarity when it comes to public benefits, as there are no triggers or details on those benefits. The ill-defined zones are bad public policy and likely to create a race to the bottom, where different regions are incentivized to lower standards to try to attract investment.

There is virtually unfettered discretion for the Minister and Cabinet over the development of regulations. Regulations will cover very significant areas of public interest, including royalties, the definition of work to keep rights in good standing, map staking, and more.

There have been at least two public presentations on the next steps of the Mineral Resources Act; one of the Geoscience Forum in November of 2019 and another at an event sponsored by Alternatives North in late January 2020. Regular MLAs have yet to receive a briefing from the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment on this topic.

Clearly, there is a lot of work to be done to begin to implement to Mineral Resources Act. Ontario took about 10 years to fully implement its new legislation with a suite of regulations and policy. What I'm looking for from the Minister, and the public deserves, including the mining industry, is a clear plan. Everyone needs clear timelines and opportunities for public engagement in the

development of numerous sets of regulations that will be required to implement the Mineral Resources Act. I'll have questions later today for the Premier on the next steps for the Mineral Resources Act. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MADE-IN-THE-NORTH ARTS CURRICULUM

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, I spoke about mental health triage for our children. Today, I would like to focus on how we can help grow resilient children. Adolescence is a challenging time. Teens' bodies are changing as their minds are expanding. In addition to school and home pressures, teens are expected to travel the rocky roads of self-discovery and self-expression as they prepare for life after high school.

We do have NGOs like the YWCA, Rainbow Coalition of the NWT, FOXY/Smash, Northern Youth, community governments, and local sports associations working hard with volunteers to offer leadership, self-esteem, and physical activity programming for youth. As we grow our mental healthcare supports and processes, we also need to continue to evolve how we are helping youth build their resiliency toolbox.

Mr. Speaker, art has always been a part of my life. Art is a powerful connector. It connects people to one another, land, and culture. Art therapy can be used as a complement to traditional mental health treatment, where the aim is to manage behaviour, process feelings, reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, and increase self-esteem. Studies show that creating art stimulates the release of dopamine, the chemical released when we do something pleasurable and literally makes us feel happier.

We live in a unique part of the world, Mr. Speaker. Our arts and crafts are celebrated by locals and foreigners alike, and our need for cultural resurgence throughout our society is prevalent. NWT schools currently follow Saskatchewan's arts curriculum for grades one through nine, and Alberta's for grades 10 through 12. The Saskatchewan curriculum was last updated in 2011, whereas the Alberta arts curriculum was last updated in 2015.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for a made-in-the-North arts curriculum that allows us to continue building mental health supports and self-discovery tools for our youth. A made-in-the-North arts curriculum would celebrate cultural resurgence through Northern art, promote self-discovery, and help us continue to evolve the way we work at building

healthy communities. It would also enable us to tap into the network of talented northern artists that already live and create here. Today, I would like to hear from the Minister of ECE about the work that the department is doing to support the arts, and whether or not they are prepared to entertain a made-in-the-North arts curriculum. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Kam Lake.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Kam Lake residents seven-year-old Prudence Kalnay-Watson and her mother Sarah. Prudence is here on her day off and her first day of March Break to learn about consensus government. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank my constituent Sophia Lagenais(ph) for being a Page in the Assembly during this sitting, and I would like to thank all the Pages for the work they've done for us. Thank you.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I rise to welcome my Pages from Sachs Harbour, Tony and Rylan. Thank you for doing a good job here this week. I really enjoyed having them in the House, here. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nunakput. If we have missed anyone in the gallery, I'd like to welcome you all to the Chamber. It's always great to have an audience with us today, and thank you to all the Pages for all the work you've done over the last week. A lot of help you've been for the Members, and we really appreciate it. Thank you. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. Member for Nunakput.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 198-19(2): COVID-19 AND SCHOOL CLOSURES

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I rise again in regard to COVID-19, and the concerns that I have for my constituents in Nunakput and across the Beaufort-Delta, and across the territory. Will the Minister be giving

direction to the district education authorities to shut down two weeks after the kids are back from their spring break? 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. This government is following the advice of the Chief Public Health Officer, and the advice of the Chief Public Health Officer is not to shut down the schools. I don't even have the authority to shut down the schools. I can't tell the DEAs or the DEC's to shut down the schools. Legislatively, it's just not in my toolbox. The DEAs and DEC's do have the authority, though, to close schools temporarily for public safety issues, so if they believe that there is a public safety issue, then they have that ability, but it's not being recommended at this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JACOBSON: That's not what I want to hear. We have [inaudible] like they do in the South, here. We have to make a stand in regard to this COVID-19. People are worried; people are panicked. The thing is, I'm not trying to put people into a panic, but I'm just making sure that, when the teachers are coming back from the South, or anybody coming back from the South for spring break, if the DEA says, okay, we're going to shut down the school for two weeks after, making sure that the teachers get paid and the Minister supports the local DEAs on that call.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: It doesn't matter if I support them or not. They have the right to do that. I just want to let everyone know that this is a very serious concern. I take this very seriously, as do all the Cabinet Ministers. This has been our lives for the last little while, now. This is what we're focused on, is making preparations for this. There are a lot of concerns about blanket closures of schools. It can't be overstated, the types of socioeconomic impacts that closing a school can have on a community. There are childcare concerns. It would mean people would have to stay home from work. Some of those people might be healthcare workers, and they might not be able to go in and do the work that they need to, right now. So there are a lot of factors to consider, and I don't want to say that schools will be open forever. There are situations where they could be closed, but that is not my call to make. We are relying on the advice of the chief public health officer.

MR. JACOBSON: Well, I'm making a stand right now. As MLA for Nunakput, I am going to be talking to my local DEAs and requesting them to shut down the school for two weeks for the self-isolation when the people come back from the South, to self-isolate. Will the Minister commit today that there will

be no harm in pay, or anything? Will the Minister support this? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: I can't overreach my legislative authority. Education is delivered by the education councils. That's one of the reasons why I'm looking at reforming the Education Act so that, perhaps, if this happens again, I would be able to stand up here and say I have the authority to do some of these things that the Member is asking.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Mr. Speaker, I didn't get the answer I wanted. Will the Minister support the local DEAs on their decision that they make? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Like I said, we are relying on the advice of the Chief Public Health Officer. If the DEA makes decisions in line with that advice, then I would fully support it. If not, we'd have to look at it on a case-by-case basis. This is not something I can just stand up here and say, "yes" or "no." There are a lot of variables here. This is not a black-and-white situation. My number one concern is the safety, not just of the children, but of the community, because it's not necessarily the children who are affected by COVID-19; it's the elders in the community. I think that, as a government, the discussions we've had, we are doing everything in our power to ensure the safety of the residents of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 199-19(2):

COVID-19 AND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, CULTURE AND EMPLOYMENT PLANNING

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to continue on some of the questions for the Minister of ECE. I just want to know if the department of education has reached out to the Beaufort Delta Education Council and the DEAs or their staff to have a plan for next week when the teachers start returning, and the families. It's not just teachers. 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. There is a meeting today, I believe at 1:30. The deputy minister and the departmental staff are going to be having a meeting with all of the superintendents, including those from the Beaufort-Delta. There has been contact over the past few

days, as well. Those conversations are happening. I'm making sure they're happening.

MS. SEMMLER: Can the Minister also tell me how the department will ensure, if the schools aren't closed, that the most vulnerable are kept safe? For example, we have a lot of elders who work in our school. We have a high number of people who have chronic illnesses, students and staff. What the plan is for them, as well, if they're working in the school?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: That is what is being worked on as we speak. Those are the kinds of plans that we're putting in place. There were protocols in place for the H1N1 outbreak years back. Those are being updated. I know the elders are especially vulnerable. I can't speak for the Chief Public Health Officer, and I'm not going to give medical advice, but I would imagine he would want elders to stay away from places where they could contract this virus.

All of the work is being done. This has been a very fast-moving situation, and nothing is off the table right now. Looking forward, I'm willing to take whatever steps are necessary to ensure safety.

MS. SEMMLER: The question that I also have is: will the Minister work with the department of health to make sure that there is somebody in each of the communities who can educate the DEAs? Because the DEAs are regular people in the community. If they are having to have the power to do this, to make these decisions, or our regional council, they need to have some one-on-one time with a health professional who can actually give them the education to make the call. I would like to see if the two Ministers will commit to having that conversation with our DEAs in the regional board.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: The superintendents work with the DEAs and the DECs, and we have been working closely with them to get that information out so that they can disseminate it. The deputy ministers are meeting on a daily basis regarding this, and they are taking advice from the Chief Public Health Officer, and they are disseminating that advice through the proper channels. I can't commit health staff to do one-on-one work with all the DEAs because I'm not sure what the health staff are up to, but I can talk to my Cabinet colleague. Getting information to the people who need that information is a priority.

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

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you. That's not really a commitment to me. I just feel that there needs to be somebody. I know the Beaufort Delta Education Council can set up teleconferences if they had

somebody there where the local DEAs or the regional chairs could sit and ask those questions, because they may have more questions than the information being provided. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: I appreciate that suggestion, and it's always good to have information, so I will commit to work with my colleague to see if we can have a more direct line with the DEA so that they have that information. Because, like I said, they do have the authority to close schools, and so we want to make sure that they are exercising their authority with the best possible information. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 200-19(2):
CORRECTIONS ACT IMPLEMENTATION
TIMELINE

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned in my statement, I have questions for the Minister of Justice about the implementation of the new Corrections Act. In August of last year, the 18th Assembly passed the new Corrections Act, and I'm proud to say it incorporates the best practices for how offenders are treated while they're incarcerated as well as how they will be re-integrated into their communities. Can the Minister tell me when this act will be implemented? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The full act is expected to be implemented in the winter of 2021, but there's a phased approach taking place, and some of the corrections regulations will be online, I anticipate as early as this spring. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Minister for that. I'm going to dig a little deeper into the details. Can the Minister tell us what progress has been made so far on preparing for implementation?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: The Department of Justice has been working on quite a bit of policy change. There have been policy documents getting developed, and, as they're doing that, they are also developing training to go along with that, and curriculum for the various staff members and levels of staff who will be required to implement all of the new programs and policies and procedures within the act. In addition to that, there are some operating guidelines. There are new reporting relationships being developed, and all of that work, again, is occurring at present. It's ongoing. Again, that's where I say the regulations are expected to come

into play in spring of 2020, so in the next few months, and how that rolls out will then depend on the development of the policies and the training.

MS. GREEN: I appreciate the additional detail from the Minister. The Minister did mention new policies and regulations. Has the Minister considered bringing those new policies and regulations to standing committee for review?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I do know that this act was one that had significant input from the entire House and was better for it. I'm not opposed to bringing things forward to the relevant committee, and I will certainly endeavour to provide an update to the committee as to the exact state of which policies and where things are at. I can't see why we wouldn't engage in that sort of a briefing; I just don't know what timeline it will take place in the current circumstances.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister's willingness to share that information when the time is right. My last question is about how information about the new legislation will be shared with the public as well as with all those who are most directly involved now. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I acknowledge that is a good question. I do not have an answer for the Member right now. I will get an answer. It's important to have an answer. The new Corrections Act, really, is one that is a flagship for the North, for the Department of Justice. It's a piece of legislation that we are proud of, and I will look for opportunities and develop opportunities to make sure that we are sharing that with the public and showing the public the good work that is happening at the Department of Justice in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 201-19(2):
COVID-19 AND COMMUNITY PLANNING.

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. I am not going to say too much today, but I just want to say really quickly, about this COVID-19 issue we are dealing with, if anything, history has taught us that we should always make sure that we control how our people traffic is being regulated and make sure that we contain this sort of thing because, again, history has taught us that, if we ignore it, it could be very costly in terms of lives. I don't want to see that. I would rather see our government be proactive on this, so I had a quick question for the Minister of Health and Social Services. I am kind of concerned

about the small communities. Does the Minister have any backup nurses in case the current nurses are unable to work? Marsi cho.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to take this opportunity to talk about this coronavirus, the COVID-19, and I want to advise the following. The health and social services system has been preparing for a potential NWT outbreak since early February, based on emerging information from the World Health Organization and the federal government. The Office of the Chief Public Health Officer has developed guidelines for Northwest Territories health professionals and has issued regular alerts so that the health and social services workforce is being kept informed. Clinical resources will continue to be developed to reflect the latest advice from the international and national infectious disease experts, with guidance from the Chief Public Health Officer and staff, and is being provided to the frontline daily.

The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority held a first staff information session last week, where the Chief Public Health Officer presented on the coronavirus. The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority has also been retraining staff on the use of personal protection equipment, hand hygiene, proper hand-washing techniques, and have provided education sheets on the COVID-19 over the last four weeks. Presently, the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority have scheduled weekly all-Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority staff calls to provide information. Should the frequency of these calls needs to be increased, that will be done. I do want to talk a little bit more about the process, if that is okay; I think this is important, and I just want to go further into detail. I apologize to the House.

The swab testing kit for coronavirus is a standard nasopharyngeal swab. The swab resembles a large Q-tip, that is used to swab the back of your throat. This is a standard item stocked in all of our facilities. I have been assured that the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services has also been delivering more swabs to all of the staffed health centres. Once a test is taken, it is sent to the provincial lab in Alberta, with a three-to-seven-day turnaround time for results, depending on your location.

The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority wants to ensure that all of their testing for COVID-19 are being directed to individuals who meet the screening criteria. The criteria for screening includes people returning from outside the Northwest Territories who develop

symptoms after 14 days of recent travel. Symptoms include fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. So, if residents have travelled and are developing symptoms, they are being asked to self-isolate, contact their local health centre or the public health unit for information on how to coordinate testing, and also refer to the department's frequently asked questions posted on the website along with the attached information sheets on self-monitoring and self-isolation for more information. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NORN: Thanks for that detailed response. It's important. I think we had to get that aired out for the public and let them know and be aware. I did not get a response back, though, from the Minister. Is there a backup plan to have medical staff and nurses for our nursing stations in the territories?

HON. DIANE THOM: Yes, there is a backup plan.

MR. NORN: I heard the Minister mention a little bit about the testing and, forgive me, is it nasopharyngeal swabs? I hope I got the pronunciation correct. I am going to ask the Minister now: will a new influx of testing, will that strain our resources to do that? Because we should expect an influx of testing now, so, if we could get the Minister to respond. Marsi cho.

HON. DIANE THOM: In my long summary here, I think I did say in there that, yes, we are increasing supplies to the health centres and to the communities.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. NORN: Marsi. I have one final question, again about the small communities. If there is anybody who wants to be tested in the small communities, what is the process for that? Marsi cho.

HON. DIANE THOM: There is information on the website about what the process is, but the process is you call the 1-800 number or the number that is provided closest to your health centre and you will get a call back on the process for an assessment. Once you get the assessment, then the department will respond from there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 202-19(2):
ARTS CURRICULUM ADVISOR

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought you said Frame Lake. Thank you for that. My questions today are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. My first question today is: did Education, Culture and

Employment recently hire an arts curriculum advisor? Thank you.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Yes, Mr. Speaker, ECE recently hired a new arts education, trades and career, and technology studies coordinator to fill a position that had been previously filled, so it's not a new position.

MS. CLEVELAND: When I look at the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, I see an entire division dedicated to kids' sport and recreation. I am not saying that we do not need that at all and I, in fact, do not want that to go away, because I feel that children's activity and especially physical activity is very important as a preventative mental health support system. However, when I look at the department of education, I do not see an equally robust arts division, and so can the Minister confirm how many employees are dedicated toward youth arts curriculum development for the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: We have the one position that I just mentioned that is specifically dedicated to that. However, we do have hundreds of teachers in the territory, many of whom teach art courses.

MS. CLEVELAND: Would the Minister be willing to work with those hundreds of arts teachers he just mentioned across the territory and the person who fills the arts curriculum role within the department of education along with people from different regions in order to develop a made-in-the-North arts curriculum that includes both cultural resurgence and art therapy initiatives, as well?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Right now, our curriculum, many parts of our curriculum are, I wouldn't say outdated, but it's time for them to be renewed, and so that type of work is happening right now. We're looking across at different provinces to see what they're doing, because Alberta has gone through a change, Saskatchewan has changed, BC, and so we're looking at all of this. I think the Member has a great point that, if we can incorporate northern art and those types of things into our curriculum, that would be great. So I will definitely look into this.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the Minister's willingness to look into this. My final question today is in regard to the CALM courses that northern students currently complete in grade 10, and CALM traditionally is where students can work on resumes and they get their volunteer hours, but we hear frequently from northern youth that they need more

than that in order to get themselves ready for real life. They want budgeting classes, and they want to know how to do their taxes, and they would like to know how to do business development training. A lot of people in the North do go out and start their own businesses. So would the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment also be willing to look at the CALM curriculum so that it includes more real-life experience and education for our northern youth? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: That is something we're looking at. CALM has been around since I was in high school, and, frankly, there has always been talk that it could be done better, and I've heard that very recently, as well. So, for decades now, there have been desires to make it more relevant and, with our proposed pathways to education that the department is looking at, there are proposals to change what we now know as CALM, which is a three-credit course, to a series of one-credit courses, including financial literacy, 10 and 12; mental health and healthy relationships, 10; adult and child development. In addition, the current one-credit career and program plan completed in grade 9 is being replaced by a suite of career and transition plan courses to be taught in each year of high school, for a total of four credits, and these courses are meant to guide and support students in figuring out their future goals. So there are changes coming down the pipe to make it more relevant and address the very issues that the Member is speaking of. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 203-19(2):
COVID-19 AND THE TIMELINESS OF UPDATES

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Mr. Speaker, I just checked the coronavirus special webpage on the Department of Health and Social Services website, and the last update there is yesterday at 9:08 a.m. That's more than 24 hours that it's been without an update. Can the Minister tell us what the plans are to actually update this webpage? Look, our residents, they want timely information. We want to make sure that we instil a sense of public confidence and that we have regular updates. What are the plans to update this webpage? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just reached out to my department and I have been recently informed that the website hasn't been updated since yesterday, and we are working on

that and we will have something ASAP. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. Can the Minister tell us, though, what is going to be the regular schedule for updates? Is it going to be once a day? Is it going to be more than once a day? If the situation starts to change, what will be the schedule for updating the webpage and getting timely information out to our residents?

HON. DIANE THOM: We don't have a schedule now, but the website will be updated as required. So, if there is pertinent information that needs to be put out there, we will have it updated, but we will work on a schedule.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. Can I just make a suggestion that the schedule itself actually be posted to the website, so our residents know when it's going to be regularly updated and whether it's once a day? I hope it's a little more often than that. Look, I was looking at a Johns Hopkins University website that shows coronavirus around the world. It's updated regularly, live. I want to get a commitment out of the Minister that the schedule for updating is actually going to be put onto the website itself so that our residents know what the frequency of the updates is going to be.

HON. DIANE THOM: I think that's an excellent idea from the Member, and that is something we will have a look at, to make sure that the residents of the Northwest Territories know when things will be updated to the website.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. I hope that she more than just looks at it; that she actually directs her staff to do this. I would like to know from the Minister whether there are any changes from the last posting to the website, which shows zero cases of coronavirus in the Northwest Territories and 54 persons being tested. Is there an update that the Minister can provide us right now? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE THOM: As of now, there is no update. We still have no cases in the Northwest Territories, positive, from our results of any coronavirus here in the Northwest Territories. I would also like to let the Members know that we will have a briefing with our Chief Medical Health Officer after we're done session today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, I did have questions for the Premier, so if you could put me back on the list. Masi.

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

QUESTION 204-19(2):
COVID-19 RESPONSE PLANS

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have questions for the Minister of Finance regarding the coronavirus. My first question is: have all departments completed response plans?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, all departments have been acting on emergency preparedness now for some time, and there are response plans being developed by every department. Business plans are being looked at by every department to plan for the contingencies, and I believe the next meeting of all deputy ministers, in fact, is this Monday to determine whether or not they need to run any special scenarios in anticipation of the change in situation. I hope that answers the Member's question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JOHNSON: If the coronavirus gets to a more serious stage and we have confirmed cases, can the Minister of human resources speak to steps that will be taken in regard to remote work, to make sure that continuity of government occurs and those who can work from home, because they're in isolation, are able to?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes. This is a whole-of-government approach that is being taken right now. All of the departments are involved, multiple Ministers are involved, multiple deputy heads are involved, and I certainly can assure the Member and the public that various scenarios have been run, starting firstly with the health Department and their staff, but also including all the other staff and the essential services that are provided throughout the communities. They're considering the fact that we have to fly people into communities to provide those services. Everything from power and housing, straight down to corrections, all departments are aware of these important situations. They are planning for current situations, but also should there, in fact, be a need to change and to amplify what's being done, that is being looked at by human resources, as I say, in part, but also by all of the other departments in lead and also the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs who are engaged at the community level and who are taking a lead in terms of emergency preparedness.

MR. JOHNSON: I want to just emphasize that I believe the most important thing is that the Chief Public Health Officer is the key lead here, and we should clearly be following the best advice of medical professionals. I was hoping that the Minister of Finance could speak to steps that are taken to ensure that our government is not hosting large events and any of the steps based on the advice of the Chief Public Health Officer to limit the, kind of, contact and transmission throughout the GNWT, because our staff do travel often.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, our Chief Public Health Officer does have significant authority and has been very much involved with Cabinet and with all of the government in terms of identifying potential events to which she would want to exercise her authority to cancel an event, and she is doing so in a way that is responsive and continuously responsive as the situation has unfolded with COVID.

Notices have gone out to communities. Notices have gone out to Indigenous governments in order to bring their information in to the public health officer and to the GNWT so that all of these different parts can be working together. Notices continue to flow between levels of government and will continue to do so in response to the public health authority, who continues to meet with the Chief Public Health Officer. I certainly can say that, as I think has been the message here this morning, there is a lot happening, but all of those parts are communicating, and there's a lot happening in the background and a lot of information that is flowing between all of these different levels of government from our Chief Public Health Officer, who has remained very much engaged at this level, but also on the national level.

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

QUESTION 205-19(2):
COVID-19 AND AIR TRANSPORTATION
CONTROL

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This question is for the Minister of Health. Can the Minister confirm; just a second here. I'll back up a step. In the South Slave, and in, I guess, the territory, we continue to have air traffic and vehicle traffic coming in and going. Is there a plan in place to address and monitor this situation during this virus issue? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our department, we are working with what we have. We will enhance messaging. We are all very busy, all of

our departments, and I take this opportunity to just commend the staff and the department for all of the hard work that they have been doing. Yes, our department is looking at some of the traffic control and what does that mean. Again, we have our Chief Medical Officer here with us this afternoon to explain what's going on in terms of flights and travelling and how does that impact the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Earlier, the Minister of ECE said he didn't have the authority to direct some matters. I am asking, I guess, myself and the people in the NWT, we're looking to this government to take leadership in developing the plans to keep people safe, remove fear, and make sure that any untrue information is taken out of the equation. Can the Minister of Health confirm the chain of command within her department or the government as we deal with COVID-19?

HON. DIANE THOM: Our Chief Public Health Officer has her own jurisdiction, and there is nothing that the Minister can override. She makes the final call on all decisions when it comes to anything that affects the residents of the Northwest Territories.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: She has the authority on anything; it's pretty well anything to do with health, but we have other issues, like flights coming and going. We have traffic on the road. There are other areas that we have control over, as well. Is that correct?

HON. DIANE THOM: At this point in time, that would be the decision of the Department of Infrastructure. If the department of health declares a health emergency or if, through the Emergency Measures Act, a state of emergency is declared, both of those processes do allow for extraordinary measures to do such activities as close the highways or to protect public health and safety. As the Member is aware, COVID-19 is being monitored on a daily basis, and any decisions to close air or highways would be done in full consultation with the impacted Government of the Northwest Territories departments.

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

QUESTION 206-19(2):
COVID-19 AND SUPPORT FOR SMALL
BUSINESS

MS. CLEVELAND: It's been a long week. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Out in Kam Lake, we have a lot of businesses that are asking a lot of questions about the coronavirus and how this may impact their businesses. I am wondering if the Minister of Finance can speak to whether or not the

government plans to help support businesses that may feel hardship during this time. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the Department of Finance began running models on potential impacts of the coronavirus already some time ago. We continue to update those models as the situation progresses, and we are also, of course, in contact with our partners in the federal government. The federal government has already announced funding coming through to all provinces and territories to support the incurring of expenses, but also to support the impacts, such as impacts to small businesses and to individuals.

In short, a simple answer is yes. We are well aware that there is going to be potential impacts on small businesses and sole proprietors, as well as individual employees of those businesses. I don't have the plans to roll out right now, but just simply to assure that looking into that has been happening already for some time, and we will continue to do that as things develop. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. CLEVELAND: In regard to communicating that information, once it is available, to business owners, how does the Department of Finance plan to get that information out?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: It's already been a commitment that has been made on my behalf as the Minister of Finance to do a much better job of communicating and sharing information. There are, of course, multiple channels, whether it's a website, whether it's email blasts, whether it's media releases. Certainly, if there are going to be, or when there may be, announcements that support small businesses and industry across the Northwest Territories, I am going to make sure that we marshal all of those opportunities and that we communicate effectively, clearly, and promptly to the people and the businesses in the Northwest Territories.

MS. CLEVELAND: In regard to the \$1 billion that the federal government has committed in order to support provinces and territories through expenses incurred by the coronavirus, would those funds come to the GNWT first, and then be distributed from the government to people on the ground?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: It's difficult to make commitments on the part of money that is coming from a different government, but I can say that my understanding at this point is that the full panoply of options coming out of the federal government will come in different avenues. There are likely to be some direct supports to our health

sector, and then, also, other supports that are going to go through the business sector. To the extent that they come through the Government of the Northwest Territories, the Government of the Northwest Territories is going to ensure that we are acting promptly and swiftly to make sure that we are supporting those who need support during this time.

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

QUESTION 207-19(2):
SUCCESSION PLANNING FOR INTERPRETERS
TRAINING

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. I have to juggle around with my questions here. [Translation] At this time, I would like to ask a question regarding the interpreters. I wanted to ask one of the Ministers regarding the interpreters. [Translation ends]

I would like to ask questions on the language interpreters' training. I did ask that question a while back ago; now I want to follow up again. Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to know, point blank, who is responsible for providing language interpreter training here in the Northwest Territories. Masi.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister responsible for the Official Languages Act, I can say that our department, ECE, I don't believe we are legislatively required to provide language interpretation training, but we have taken it upon ourselves to work towards that goal. Right now, there is a lack of Indigenous language speakers in the territory, as the Member knows. It makes it difficult to train interpreters when there are not enough people who speak the language to pick from. There are a number of things happening right now. A lot of those are helping us work towards training enough language speakers so that we can begin to better train language interpreters. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LAFFERTY: [Translation] When we are speaking in our language, without the interpreters, if we don't use our language, we will lose our language. I would like to ask the Minister at this time [Translation ends] [microphone turned off] ...partnerships in the past over the years, even through the Language Bureau back in 1990s, what is the responsibility of Indigenous governments or organizations on the language interpreter training? I understand that there are set allocated funds to these groups. Are there set targets on an annual basis, five-year, 10-year plan, to produce these qualified interpreters from the region?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: I don't believe there are target numbers. It's a difficult area to create those sort of metrics for. There is money that flows through ECE directly to Indigenous governments, and they are free to do what they wish with it. They use it for language training, all sorts of different events. We don't have control over what targets they might set. We do have our action plan to help revitalize languages. In that, we lay out a number of steps we want to take to help get to that point.

MR. LAFFERTY: The Minister alluded to an action plan. Obviously, I would like to see that plan of action from ECE, more specifically on interpreter training that is available to us. On another note, I talk about short-term, long-term goals of this ECE department with respect to working with the Indigenous governments' organizations. Question to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment: I understand that there is a five-year language plan. What is the status on this plan?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: I can get back to the Member with more specifics on that. I actually have the second half of my languages briefing scheduled for next week. I know that we are partway through that plan. It was only a few years ago that the department really put together this division and created this NWT Indigenous languages framework and action plan because we recognized the need for concrete action. There are languages that, within 10 years, could just be not spoken anymore unless we take some serious action.

There are a number of things that have been done. We have scholarships for students who wish to learn languages. We have a mentor-apprentice program to help partner people together with fluent speakers to help them gain fluency. We are looking at additional programs that we might be able to develop. We have a partnership with the University of Victoria, which has a long history and a lot of experience in developing language programs, to help us get to that next step, as well. We support language programs in communities. I know in Inuvik, there is the Gwich'in immersion program. There are immersion programs in Fort Providence. There are immersion programs in the Tlicho area. There are multiple things going on around the territory.

This is one part of the department. There are some people who say that culture should be its own department; Language and culture should be its own department because it is very important. I want to assure the Member that it is an area I am focusing on. I think it's vital to the success of the territory as a whole. Language is the foundation of culture. I am fully committed to doing whatever we can to help revitalize it.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. I am glad the Minister is recognizing the importance of language and cultural preservation. It should be. I fully support a stand-alone department. My final question, basically, is: we do have interpreters here in our booths, as you know, with so many years of experience. Most of them are on the verge of retirement. I would like to know if there is a plan in place, either now or if the department is working on one, that can be provided to me. In the next five years, next 10 years, how is that going to look? We have valuable services here. They are going to be retiring sooner than later. We need to be ready for that for the community. Is there a plan in place, or is the department working on that, as well? Masi.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: There is a plan. There is an action plan. I can get the Member more information. Just to let you know, the department is very supportive of this. In the 2019-2020 fiscal year, the GNWT provided \$20.4 million for Indigenous language education initiatives, and 5.9 of that was federally funded. The vast majority of that comes from the territorial government. A quarter of the funding was distributed directly to regional Indigenous governments for language revitalization initiatives; \$9 million was committed to implementing NWT action plan that I spoke of earlier; and \$11.6 million was allocated to implementing the Indigenous language in education policy, which supports the development of Indigenous languages in schools. There is a lot of work that is happening. I wish we could say we were further along. One of the important things we need is partnerships. We need speakers. We need people to want to get into these programs and learn the language. Part of this is talking about the importance of it and trying to get our youth involved, as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 208-19(2):
COVID-19 AND PUBLIC HOUSING EVICTIONS

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, with over 2,800 units, is by far the Northwest Territories' landlords. My concern is: should the COVID virus become a full-on pandemic with outbreaks across the Northwest Territories, I do not want to see people getting eviction orders when they have been told to self-isolate. I think, if this should become a pandemic, we are going to see increasingly people struggling to pay their rent. My question is to the Minister responsible for NWT Housing Corporation: should we have a pandemic with cases across the

Northwest Territories, is the Housing Corporation prepared to stop evicting people?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister responsible for NWT Housing Corporation.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Housing Corporation has taken an approach as an emergency effect right now to deal with the COVID-19 virus. We are working as a government, together as one. We will find solutions for these situations going forward. We will be looking at the eviction notices, as well. In case we need to find alternative units, we will have to end up looking at hotels for our applicants going forward. Right now, we won't be evicting anybody. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JOHNSON: I am very happy to hear that. I do hope that we do not get to that point where this is a pandemic across the Northwest Territories. I leave that up to the facts. My next question is: I am also concerned there is an issue with homelessness across the Northwest Territories, and our most vulnerable may also be our most immunocompromised who may not be able to find a place to self-isolate. Can the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation speak to the plans to address our homeless population should a full pandemic occur?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Member, for bringing up your concern, because we have to think of something very quickly in emergency plans going forward. It's something that we are working strategically at and within our approach. We are looking at the homeless population, as well, and we are going to try our best in what solutions we come up with, and how we could possibly be able to accommodate our homeless population. We are paying very strong attention to this concern, and we will be taking it to the next level.

MR. JOHNSON: I guess my question is: should a pandemic occur across the Northwest Territories, has the Housing Corporation and the Minister reached out to shelters? If possible, is it possible to secure hotel rooms for the homeless population?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: We are looking at solutions throughout the Northwest Territories, and we are looking at the smaller communities, as well, where we have limited accommodations and actually nowhere where we can actually put the clients in right now. Looking at the hotel rooms that are available, we need to start gathering and getting those numbers together, because I am not sure right now at the moment at what the availability is. I will follow up with the Member with those numbers.

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

QUESTION 209-19(2):
COVID-19 AND PLANS FOR SAFETY OF
SENIORS

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have many seniors in my riding of Yellowknife Centre, so I would like to ask the Minister of Health what kind of precautions the department has advised for organizations, including the Department of Health, who provide long-term care for seniors. Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we speak, our Chief Public Health Officer is currently meeting with the seniors and reaching out here in Northwest Territories to Avens and other places to have a discussion on the importance of ensuring the visitors and the people who are coming in and how important, you know, to sanitize, and it is just really important. I mean, you look at this virus, and it is our seniors who are most vulnerable, so we are taking precautions and we are reaching out to our seniors, as it is very important. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Minister for that. Is it the case, then, that there could be special precautions put in place to protect the people who are most at risk from this disease?

HON. DIANE THOM: You know, we need to ensure that there is limited access. I mean that is so important when we have people wanting to come and visit our elders who are in their facilities and, you know, it is our nature, it is our people who want to go and visit their elders, make sure they are okay. Our department is just reaching out to ensure that these places have limited access. I mean, although we do want to ensure that there is family who are able to come and continue meeting with their seniors, we just want to ensure the limited access piece.

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

QUESTION 210-19(2):
COVID-19 AND BORDER CONTROL IN THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. As we sit here in the House, we are getting all kinds of messages as well about this whole COVID-19. One question I have is: we have cancelled most or all the trips outside the NWT, but we still have people coming into the Northwest Territories. Is there a plan in

place to deal with that matter? I am not sure if it will be to Health or Justice or the Deputy Premier, Mr. Speaker; I will leave it to you. Masi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Deputy Premier.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This COVID-19 virus is an interdepartmental approach, and we are all working hard with our teams and we have messages that are just, we need to be consistent. I just want to defer the question over to our Minister of Justice and Finance to talk about what is some of the work that is being done in regard to the virus. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Deputy Premier. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I feel like we are all wearing sort of a collective Ministers responsible for supporting GNWT through the COVID virus hat right now, so it just so happens that I think the department of human resources or division of human resources might have had some of the most recent information on this. Just to reassure that on a broad scale, at this point, anyone coming in or out, coming into the NWT, it is suggested that they consider monitoring for their symptoms and consider whether or not they need to self-isolate.

As far as leave provisions, non-essential travel outside of NWT, as I said earlier, is being restricted and travel within the NWT is being looked at department-by-department in order to ensure that essential services are being provided, but that non-essential travel is not taking place. Beyond that, the Chief Public Health Officer again continues to brief all of the Ministers, and, as I understand, will be looking to brief the House, all the Members on the rise of the House, about any ongoing developments. Things are changing rapidly, but, at the same time, there are people who are responding to them rapidly. It is a bit difficult to do so, certainly, when we are all sitting here together, but I do have faith that that is happening even while we are here. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LAFFERTY: As it stands, obviously, we would like to follow what the Chief Medical Officer recommends, and I understand that she has stated that she doesn't have the authority to stop this from happening, people coming from the South. It is this government that is responsible, and we have had experience with PDAC participants who came back and there are some issues. This is becoming a pandemic, as it has been called. We have people coming in from the South. We don't know where they have been, but they are bringing into the Northwest Territories. Not only the Northwest Territories, but small and isolated communities. We have a lack of health professionals, so I am very

worried about my community, the Wekweeti and Gameti small communities. Is there a plan in place to deal with that matter immediately? Because we are saying, "Well, we are allowing self-isolation, if that needs to be the case," but we are just allowing them to do that on their own cases. It is optional. As a government, are we dealing with this particular matter?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, the small communities and the needs of small communities have been at the heart and at the center of a lot of the considerations that have gone into the planning that is under way. I know that there are going to be some differences. Hesitancy now isn't the lack of a plan. Hesitancy is that I want to ensure that I am speaking with the most current information on behalf of all the departments.

Obviously, the House is aware that, right now, our Premier is actually on a phone call with the Prime Minister and other first Ministers. It would be helpful, I think, to know what has been discussed in that conversation, and it would be helpful certainly to check back in with all the departments and our Public Health Officer, as they have been meeting this morning and taking steps to ensure that they are doing everything they need to. Because there hasn't been a confirmed case in the Northwest Territories, and so we want to ensure that there is not a confirmed case in the Northwest Territories, as a result of which our Chief Public Health Officer has been taking an approach that is directed at achieving that goal. That, Mr. Speaker, is why, if there is a sense of us not speaking fully, it is because we want to speak clearly and correctly and accurately with the most up-to-date information.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the fact that we have small communities who have less healthcare infrastructure than the larger centres, that has been something that I know I have personally raised when I have been on the national calls with my colleagues, and I believe they have been raised by the colleagues in Cabinet with their colleagues, that we need to take those considerations very seriously. I simply want to assure the Member that, as soon as I have the current up-to-date plan and information, we will share that with the House and get that information out to the public.

MR. LAFFERTY: I am just trying to get the points across so I can share them with my constituents, as well. People who have been texting and messaging us. People who are coming from the South. To be self-isolated, is it optional, or is it mandatory from our perspective, the government's perspective?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: At this point, it's still a recommendation that anyone coming back into the Northwest Territories would consider their own symptomology and determine whether or not

they need to self-isolate. That is still the recommendation. Indeed, there have been media releases on a national level only just this morning about travel that is coming back internationally and recommending that anyone returning internationally, I believe, is being recommended, indeed, to self-isolate. They're being a bit more aggressive here in the Northwest Territories about travel coming in from elsewhere in Canada, as well, but the latest information that I have is that that was still a recommendation.

Again, in response to what was happening at a national level this morning, literally as we have been sitting here for the past hour, there has been an effort to update that information for the Northwest Territories in keeping with what's happening nationally and ensuring that we do what we can to either prevent or slow the time within which we would have a virus identified here in the Northwest Territories. I will continue to update the House, and we will continue, all of us, to update the public in due course.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The time for oral questions has expired. Item 8, written questions. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. I request that we take a short recess, please, just to discuss some items of an urgent matter. Marsi cho.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay. We will take a short recess.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: We will now reconvene. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to the 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. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, motions. Item 17, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Government House Leader.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 3:

AN ACT TO AMEND THE PUBLIC HIGHWAYS ACT

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Sahtu, that Bill 3, An Act to Amend the Public Highways Act, be read for the second time. The bill amends the Public Highways Act to address government liability for loss or damage resulting from a failure to maintain primary highways in the Northwest Territories. The bill requires the Minister to maintain

primary highways and provides that the Government of the Northwest Territories is liable, with exceptions, for loss or damage resulting from a failure to do so. The bill makes clear that the Minister has no duty to maintain roads that are not designated as primary highways under this act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Government House Leader. To the principal of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Bill 3-19(2) has had second reading and is referred to committee. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates 2020-2021; and Tabled Document 43-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure 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 will call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of committee, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh?

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. Committee would like to consider Tabled Document 43-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021, Department of Finance. Marsi cho.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We will proceed with the first item. 2020-2021 Supplementary Estimates, No. 1, (infrastructure expenditures), Infrastructure, capital investment expenditures, asset management. Sorry, I forgot. Minister of Finance, do you have any opening remarks?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, Madam Chair. Thank you. Madam Chair, I am here to present the Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021. The supplementary estimates document proposes an increase of \$28.7 million, comprised of the following items:

- \$10 million to fund environmental assessment

and planning work to be completed in 2023-2024, to inform the potential construction of an all-weather road from Highway No. 4 to Lockhart Lake within the Slave Geological Province Corridor. Of this amount, 75 percent will be funding by the Government of Canada's National Trade Corridors Fund;

- \$10.6 million will be for surface structures adaptation for climate change resilience at the Mike Zubko Airport in Inuvik;
- \$3.5 million will be to increase fuel storage capacity to mitigate impacts to public and essential services;
- these two projects are funded 75 percent by the Government of Canada's Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund; and
- \$4.6 million for the Mike Zubko Airport runway extension design, which is 100 percent funded by the Department of National Defence.

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

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Do you have witnesses to bring?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Chair, I do have witnesses, and I think I can say at present staff from the Department of Finance, all of my senior staff from the Department of Finance, have been involved in a variety of meetings this morning, and they are on their way. They are not here. I think they had thought there would be a break, not realizing that we had just broken for lunch. I am told they are literally on their way here, but they are not here now. Madam Chair, I am prepared to begin speaking to the infrastructure supplementaries on my own and have the witnesses escorted in as they arrive.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. In light of the development that the witnesses are not here, I would ask just for a quick recess until the witnesses arrive. Marsi cho.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I will ask committee. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Okay.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I call the committee back to order. Thank you. We will wait

for your witnesses to come, and then we will have the Sergeant-at-Arms escort them in. Is he here? Okay. Sergeant-at-Arms, can you escort the witness in, please. Minister, will you please introduce your witness for the record.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the indulgence. We are all working diligently this morning on a number of things. I have here with me Mr. Sandy Kalgutkar. He is the deputy minister of Finance.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. I will now open the floor for general comments. Seeing no questions, we will move to detail. We will begin on page 6, 2020-2021 Supplementary Estimates No. 1, (Infrastructure Expenditures), infrastructure, capital investment expenditures, asset management, not previously authorized, \$10 million. Questions? Member for Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 9-19(2):
TABLED DOCUMENT 43-19(2)
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES), NO. 1,
2020-2021 - DELETION OF \$10,000,000 NOT
PREVIOUSLY AUTHORIZED FROM
DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE, CAPITAL
INVESTMENT EXPENDITURES, ASSET
MANAGEMENT, DEFEATED

MR. O'REILLY: Madam Chair, I move that \$10 million not previously authorized be deleted from infrastructure capital investment expenditures, asset management in the Supplementary Estimates, Infrastructure Expenditures, No. 1, 2020-2021. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): There is a motion being distributed. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I think it's important that the public realize this is a very important debate that we are about to have. It's a debate about the future of the Northwest Territories. It's a debate about infrastructure projects and people.

What this motion is about is deleting from the supplement appropriations \$10 million that has not been previously authorized for work on the Slave Geological Province road. I fully understand that this is 75 percent federal funding. I understand that this is part of a larger project and that the estimated costs are \$1 billion or more to actually build the project. I raised numerous concerns about this in the last Assembly, around a whole variety of issues and matters, and I have talked about those with my colleagues when we were developing our priorities. I talked about it during the mandate, and I am talking again about it here today. We have to make

hard decisions, and that is why people elect us to this House, is to make those kinds of decisions.

My position has always been clear, that I will put people over large infrastructure projects, investment in people over large infrastructure projects. I have always asked for detailed analyses of economic costs, benefits, and value for money around these infrastructure projects, and I have never gotten it. I understand that some of this expenditure may be for that work, but I think we need to have the debate and discussion now around whether this is the right path to start to go down and whether we want to continue to spend money developing this particular project. What we are being asked to do is authorize \$2.5 million of our own money for next year, but that is just the beginning, where this is \$10 million over four years.

In my view, the more time and effort that we continue to spend on this particular project, it takes away from work we can and should be doing on other projects, namely housing. That, to me, has always been one of my highest priorities. It's what I hear from my constituents. That is why I am here. By continuing to spend money on this project, it is taking away from our ability and efforts to do other projects, whether it's housing, whether it's healthcare, whether it's education. Unfortunately, we have never had, sort of, the analysis about, if we had \$1 billion to spend, where would we get the biggest bang for our buck? What I do know is that the economic multipliers used by the Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics will show you that investment in health and education creates way more jobs than investment in mining and non-renewable resource development. That's not me saying it; that's the Bureau of Statistics.

One of the reasons that I have expressed a lot of concern about this project is the state of the Bathurst caribou herd, and make no mistake about it, this road, as planned, will go through the range of the Bathurst caribou herd. The planning to date has been to maximize access to mineral deposits. I asked very clearly on the floor of the House how the routing was being designed, and so on. I was told that it was being done to maximize access to mineral resources. There has been no consideration whatsoever given to caribou and their habitat. We still don't have a fully funded plan to help the Bathurst caribou herd recover. I will say that we do have a range plan that has finally been approved; it has not been fully funded. I have kept asking on the floor of this House, "Where is the work on habitat protection?" That has not been done, and we need a much more balanced approach on that. Quite frankly, I would take the \$2.5 million from this and spend it on other things, including habitat protection.

I think the other issue that this project raises is one of priorities, in terms of even our own infrastructure. In the last government, they had an opportunity to submit a number of projects to the National Trade Corridors program, including the Frank Channel Bridge. The previous Cabinet decided that the Slave Geological Province road was a higher priority than the Frank Channel Bridge. That, to me, Madam Chair, was the wrong set of priorities. I will always put public safety over a large infrastructure project. This money can and should have gone to do work on the Frank Channel Bridge.

I want to say one more thing about this, Madam Chair, and it comes from the economic analysis report that was done in March of last year by the Department of Infrastructure. It was not given to the MLAs of the day. We were not told about it, but it is available on the Department of Infrastructure website. The assumptions used were that, even during the engineering and professional services stage of this project, 66 percent of the labour work to be done is going to be imported. Even the \$2.5 million that we're going to put in here, two thirds of that is not going to stay in the Northwest Territories; it's going to go elsewhere. At no stage in the Slave Geological Province road, from design, construction, right to actual mining, will any more than 50 percent of those jobs actually stay in the Northwest Territories. If we spend a billion dollars on housing, I would tell you that a lot more of those jobs would stay in the Northwest Territories; or on health, education, you name it. Those are the kinds of priorities that I came here with.

Lastly, I want to say, Madam Chair, that I just simply believe that we cannot afford to build this project, even if it was the right thing to do. We cannot afford it as a government. We're very close to the debt wall. This would require extraordinary borrowing or increasing our borrowing limit. I just don't think that we can afford this, nor can we afford to do three infrastructure projects, the big three, at the same time. I think we are fooling ourselves, we're fooling the people of the Northwest Territories, if we continue to try to tell them that we're going to do these three large infrastructure projects all at the same time.

Madam Chair, this is a very, very important debate that we are about to have, and it's the first time that we have had this debate in public about what our priorities are going to be, moving forward, as a government and about this particular project. I encourage all of my colleagues to think carefully about what they're going to say and where they want to stand on this issue. Madam Chair, I request a recorded vote. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. To the motion. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have thought about this expenditure of these funds, and initially, I had said that, when it came to this road, I had no interest in it whatsoever, but at the same time, I reflected on that, and I don't look at this as an infrastructure project versus people. What we have to look at, we have to look at it as a balanced approach to growing the NWT. The NWT, right now, we need an economy. Right now, besides the government, our main economy really is mining, and we know that it's going to end at some point. The diamond mines might end there, but something else might take its place.

I still believe that we have to support our education system, our health system, our public housing requirements, but we also have to support the business sector. When you look at the money that comes into the Northwest Territories, over a billion of that goes into health, goes into education, and goes into housing. If you take a look at, really, what goes into the business or the economic side, it's very little. I want to make sure, when we go forward, that it is balanced. I know that we have different opinions here with some of us, but that's okay. That's what I like about it, that we hear everything.

In saying that, one thing that my colleague had mentioned is that the jobs are going to come from the South to do this work. The money is going to go south, and it's up to us to make sure that doesn't happen. We have to make sure that anybody doing work for the GNWT has to have a stake in the Northwest Territories. They have to have an office here. We have to hold their feet to the fire to make sure that they hire people here. They have to have some ownership in land, buildings, and infrastructure themselves in the Northwest Territories. If we don't do that, then I would have to agree with my colleague that we don't need it. As long as the government can, you know, assure me that that's going to happen, then I have no problem allowing the expenditure to go through.

I guess, the motion that is before us right now, I won't be supporting it for the very reason that the economy is very important to me, and there are businesses in the Northwest Territories that are struggling and there are people who are struggling. We have to make sure that we have a diversified economy, and that means looking at all aspects of it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. To the motion. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Chair, thank you. It is perhaps fitting that we are going to discuss what I agree is an important debate on a day when we are otherwise very focused on

marshalling resources here in the Northwest Territories for the health and safety of our people. It brings, for me, as Minister of Finance, into focus the fact that we are so dependent on the federal government for so many things. It brings into focus the fact that we have to remain, at times, more visionary and better leaders; more visionary of our future and better leaders for our people.

One of the priorities that we collectively set, all 19 of us, Madam Chair, as you well know, was to have strategic investments in our infrastructure. Specifically, this project, Madam Chair. This is one of the first opportunities that we're having to actually advance those priorities in a meaningful way. We didn't come to that decision about priorities easily. We didn't come to it necessarily unanimously, but, Madam Chair, that's not necessarily how consensus government works. Consensus government is an opportunity to debate and to discuss.

Madam Chair, we are before you here. I am before you here on what I've said already is agreed to as being a priority for this Assembly, that it was something we would move forward on. The current appropriation that is being proposed builds on an appropriation that existed already from 2019. It's an opportunity to begin the employment assessment. It's an opportunity to begin the planning. What that then means, Madam Chair, is that this is an opportunity to be comprehensive. It's an opportunity to be consultative. It's an opportunity to showcase the fact that the Northwest Territories can do resource development differently and better. We can be leaders in resource development. We can be leaders in Indigenous relationships. We can be leaders in ways that can show the rest of Canada how modern resource development can work. This is just one part of it. This is just the opening stages, the environmental assessment and the planning stage.

Madam Chair, it's an opportunity to be world-class. It's also an opportunity, Madam Chair, to deliver widespread benefits across the Northwest Territories. It's an opportunity to truly have all of our people shine. It's the first phase, and it's a phase where, if we're going to have the concerns already raised around whether or not, Madam Chair, to involve and engage local employment, then that's up to us. It's up to us, Madam Chair, through our procurement and our contracting to ensure that, in fact, we engage the people of the Northwest Territories.

Madam Chair, it's an opportunity for us to actually bring forward a project that will have benefits for several regions. For example, Madam Chair, it was suggested that we could invest this money elsewhere, in the Frank Channel Bridge. Well, the Frank Channel Bridge is a key link. If this is going to

be a transportation corridor that's going to link the Northwest Territories to Nunavut, to the Arctic, well, we need to maintain the existing linkages we have, and the Frank Channel Bridge is a critical part of that. By bringing this project forward, I'd suggest that, in fact, this is going to be another reason why the Frank Channel Bridge should be brought forward, as well, and it's going to be a strong reason to support that project.

We have, in the past, sought funding for the Frank Channel, but the federal government had granted this project the funding; but this is now a chance to come back around and say that that bigger picture, that vision, needs to be supported on all those fronts.

Madam Chair, it's also an opportunity to, perhaps, boost our clean energy industry. It's an opportunity to look at what's happening in Taltson and say whether or not this would not actually support that project, too, by encouraging development, by encouraging the opportunity for further corridors for energy delivery.

Obviously, too, Madam Chair, this is an opportunity where we can better develop the mineral resource sector in terms of the kinds of mining industry that will support green energy. Again, Madam Chair, we can be leaders in this, but it is up to us to have that vision, and it's up to us as to how you're going to develop it, and this is really, again, just the starting point.

We all know in this House that we're facing a decline in our current resource industry. Our current resource industry has already largely reached its peak, arguably has reached its peak, and we want to rebuild our mineral resource industry. We want to build investor confidence, and we want to rebuild that in a way that is current and modern and responsive to this Assembly, and this Assembly's vision. This is not prior Assemblies. This is not the past Assembly. This is not the way things have always been done. We all arrived here on a mission of change, and we all arrived here on a mission of doing things differently and better. That means keeping resource dollars in the North. That means keeping the spending on projects in the North. That means engaging local industries. That will be up to all of us, and it will be up to this Cabinet to do that, and to deliver on that promise.

Madam Chair, I don't see necessarily that it's a simple choice of saying, "Spend it on health or spend it on something else." That's not, unfortunately, the ease with which government budgeting works. We just don't get to pick and choose one thing over another. We need an economy in the North. If we don't have an economy in the North, Madam Chair, we aren't going to have people. We won't need all the other things if we

don't have the people here to support that economy. We need all of these things together. That's where it becomes a case of saying, Madam Chair, that I do believe that we have to advance this project, and advance housing. We can advance this project with this vote, and still vote on all the other things that we have in our priorities by being careful, by being balanced, by looking at that total picture.

Would I ask necessarily for this House to vote on the same project over and over? No, Madam Chair; that's not what we've done. We've presented a \$2 billion budget. This is one small piece of an infrastructure supplementary appropriation to do one project, but there's so much more that the GNWT is delivering on. This project, however, Madam Chair, is the opportunity to grow the economy, to increase investor confidence, and to truly move ourselves forward in a way that makes us different and leaders.

Madam Chair, the consequences of not doing that are significant. If we were to choose to turn this away, and to turn this money away, we'd be turning our backs on a project that's been approved to the tune of \$30 million from the federal government. I have over and over now already heard it said, the importance of reaching out to our federal partners. The importance of engaging with the federal government to ensure investment in infrastructure in the North, social infrastructure and physical infrastructure. Madam Chair, I'm not sure where exactly I would go or how I would restart if we were to suddenly turn around and say, "No, this major nation-building project that you've been looking at since the 1950s, we're turning our backs on it."

Madam Chair, I don't think we can afford to do that. I think, too, we have to think about the bigger scene of what we're building, what we're potentially building. It is a transportation corridor into an area that doesn't have communities. It's a transportation corridor into an area of high economic opportunity. There are tourism opportunities. This will support the ability to, again, as I've said, ultimately support a potentially green energy industry in terms of the minerals that are being sourced. It provides a corridor into Nunavut. It really is nation-building, and it's up to us whether we want to do that.

Madam Chair, as a result of that, I am asking people to continue to vote this project forward, and to, as such, not vote in favour of the motion to remove this money from the supplementary appropriation. Thank you, Madam Chair.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Minister. Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Going over the motion and going over the bill, we, as

Members of the Assembly, have to look at the big picture. We have to make sure that we are creating jobs and employment for the people in regard to projects where, basically, free money is coming from the federal government. I think what the biggest thing is, how I look at it is, when Yellowknife does good, we do good, and this is jobs for Yellowknife. There's a potential opportunity to make change in regard to the socio-economic agreements between the mine sites that are going to have access to that. We're going to be able to hold them more accountable, and having to have your office here, people working out of here, people working from the Delta where we're from, giving them opportunities. Potentially, this could bring five mines in. I know it's going through traditional grounds for caribou, but we had this same thing with our Tuktoyaktuk to Inuvik Highway, and, you know what, it seems to be working. In the big picture, we are open for business.

If we do not do this project and give that \$2.5 million, I want that \$2.5 million for some of the stuff that I want to do, but something like this, this is needed. It's free money. We have got to work for it, work together. I agree a lot with my colleague, but today we have to support this bill to go through. It has other things on it, right, for Inuvik, for the airport and stuff like that, so I am fully supporting this. I won't be supporting the motion. I will be supporting the go-forward for the bigger picture across the territory. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. To the motion.

MR. NORN: Yes. Marsi cho, Madam Chair. I just want to share my thoughts on this motion. I am looking at a map of the Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh riding, and this goes right through the heart of it. This project goes right through the heart of my riding, and I am about a balanced approach, as well. However, I am tired of a lot of the resources that come out, that are being extracted, a lot of the projects that come in here and seeing my constituents go without, still go without, and it's still continuing, and I am tired of it. I am sick and tired of it, and so are the chiefs, as well, of the Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh riding and the Akaitcho territory. I have consulted with our chiefs. They agree with me on this. I was conflicted in the fact that, yes, we need an economy, but there is still not enough consultation. The other stuff in the Delta, I am okay with, but I am not okay with the support, so I will be supporting this part of the motion. That is where I stand on that. That is all I have to say. Marsi cho, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. To the motion. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know this is part of our mandate that we set out together, all of us. I am very much about the economy. We have to set the stage to ensure that we are still open for business. I am very strong about the economy, always was, ever since I have been here. Even before, in my previous leadership, everything was around business and the economy, even in what I have done in my previous leadership, setting up the First Nation to ensure that when I leave they are set up for life.

I think it's extremely important that a strong economy is best for all the people of the Northwest Territories. We must have faith. We must have hope. We have to look to the future. A lot of our youth do not come back here because we don't have a strong economy, when they go out for education. That has happened many times, even in the South Slave area. I believe that the economy is extremely important, a balanced economy and an economy that will ensure that all the social programs are looked after. You can't have it only one way.

I appreciate the comments and the motion that came forward from my learned colleague, and I respect his views, and I hope he respects mine. I will be voting against this motion because I am in favour. We are only asking for, the government is only asking for, \$2.5 million or so, and it's a preliminary thing with the environmental and the studies that have to take place. That was part of our mandate when we all sat down together, all 19 of us, and so I will be voting against this motion, and I am in favour of a strong economy. Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Thebacha. To the motion. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I find this a very frustrating workday, today. To be quite honest with everybody, I wish that we had been able to sit and go through every detail of the entire future of this project before we came and thought about putting dollars into it. In actual fact, I wish that this had been dealt with 20 years ago, when diamond mines were at their height. Maybe the diamond mines would have actually paid for a lot more of our infrastructure if we had made that part of the deal. However, we can't go back. We can only go forward.

In regard to what the Minister of Finance said in terms of strategic investment on the three major infrastructure projects, yes, that was in our mandate, but I don't think we ever had a conversation about what direction we were actually going to take. We knew that those were the three major infrastructure projects that the territory had

and that we were interested, but we also knew that we do not have the money for all of them. The Slave Geological Province road is a \$1-billion project, and we do not have \$1 billion to finish it. It's just not part of our reality. The diamond mines will very likely be closed before this road is fully open and operational, and I know that there are other opportunities for more roads. Do we even have the money to contribute 25 percent of the total cost? That is also an unknown and very frustrating, because how much money are we going to put into a project that we are not sure we will actually be able to financially see through to the very end?

The other part of it is: will Nunavut actually contribute their half of the road, which goes up to the Arctic Ocean, which is a huge component of this project? I feel like there are a lot of questions about whether or not we can make this work and whether or not it will make it to the Arctic Ocean. That being said, I would hate to wait and then 20 years from now wish that we had actually looked into this and wish that we had actually done a research study to see if this was feasible rather than having the people of the Northwest Territories continue to question where we should put our money, along with everybody sitting around this table here today, because the economy is important. When we went door to door, and I know a lot of the people in Yellowknife heard a lot of the same things, one of the primary concerns of people of the Northwest Territories or at least, sorry, in Yellowknife, was our economy and was the future of jobs in the Northwest Territories. We are sitting here with an opportunity to leverage some serious federal dollars and essentially provide jobs for a \$2.5-million investment on our part and a \$7.5-million investment on the federal government's part, but, that being said, in order for us to actually maintain benefit or get any benefit from that money, we have to actually have northern employment and northern contractors working on this.

If we look at the Members' statements we have heard recently from the Member for Monfwi in regard to, say, the road to Whati, 40 percent of that was northern contractors, and 40 percent is not enough in my mind. That is not good enough for the money that we are keeping in the Northwest Territories. If we are going to be looking at spending money and saying that this does create jobs in the Northwest Territories, then we have to be diligent in making sure that we are actually getting something for our own money and that we are actually leveraging the federal dollars and putting them into our own economy because, otherwise, there is absolutely no sense in doing this because, yes, while we say we are open for business, we definitely are not open to be taken advantage of anymore. We need to start maintaining some benefit from the resources of the

Northwest Territories, and we need to start working with Indigenous governments and making sure that people are benefitting. Right now, our people are hurting, and that is not the case. I am going to just go through my notes here and make sure I am not rambling too much.

Like the Minister of Finance also said, it is up to us to make this work. We have not done a great job of that in the past with the road to Whati and with Stanton Foundation. I have multiple people in my riding who have not been paid who were sub-contractors from larger contractors through the Stanton Territorial Hospital Project.

We are not doing any kind of service to the people of the Northwest Territories when we are inviting southern companies to come up and then not even pay the Northerners with the money we are hoping to keep in the North. I think that it is our responsibility, to provide the people of the Northwest Territories with as much information as possible. While this supplementary of \$2.5 million is looking into an environmental assessment, that is what it is doing. It is providing people of the Northwest Territories with information so that we can be able to say, "Yes, we are going to do this going forward," or, "No, we are not going to do this going forward," and be able to have an evidence-based decision as to what infrastructure project we are actually strategically going to put our money behind. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. To the motion. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. One of the first things that I learned in this House when I was elected in 2015 is that consensus government means being heard. It doesn't mean that everybody agrees with a single point. I appreciate the opportunity to be heard today on this issue. I want to say about the mandate commitments that I, personally, did not agree with every priority that we put into the mandate, but what I have learned is that you give a little and take a little. I would not have put three infrastructure projects into that mandate, but there was a lot of interest from other Members in having them all there. That is what we ended up with.

What I said in my reply to the budget address just a couple of weeks ago is that I had a lot of questions about whether we could do all three projects simultaneously, about the ability of the NWT business and employment sectors to maximize the benefits of the projects at this stage, and whether, in fact, the 75 percent offered by Ottawa, while looking like a good deal, is actually the tail wagging the dog. By offering 75 percent, it obliges the NWT to spend 25 percent, and we don't really have 25

percent. This supplemental appropriation will drain our supplementary reserve fund and, in fact, put it into deficit by over \$1 million. It's not like we have a lot of money to put into this project or other projects at this time.

What we did do in our mandate, in our priority-setting exercise, which I do fully agree with is, as other Members have mentioned, to look at how to maximize northern benefits from projects and how to maximize northern procurement. That is the whole range of things from contracting northern businesses and employing people who live here full time to or mining and royalty regime. This work hasn't been started. We just agreed to do it in February. We need to do this work before we start spending money on infrastructure, on these big infrastructure projects. I understand it's preparatory work. I also understand that, in the whole scheme of our budget, it is a small amount of money, but we have to start somewhere in putting our feet down and saying, "We are not going to have any more projects in which the majority of the benefits are flowing out of the NWT to contractors who are based outside of the NWT, to workers who fly in and fly out and leave us wondering why we have missed the boat again." We saw that happen with each of the big infrastructure projects we have had to date. At some point, it needs to stop. I am going to suggest that this is the place at which it needs to stop.

I don't want to say that this road should never be built or that it won't ultimately bring some benefits to the Northwest Territories, but I am saying we need to do some preparatory work around retaining benefits in all their different dimensions. We need to do some revenue generating work to put ourselves in a better position to spend the 75-cent dollars that come to us from Ottawa. I will be supporting this motion. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to bring out a few points. I hear people and I hear their concerns in stating that we need to support people. I agree we need to support people, Madam Chair. I am a social worker by degree. I also ran four years ago because I wanted to address homelessness. Housing was a big priority for me when I came in. However, I also am a diamond driller's daughter, Madam Chair, and I recognize that a large portion of our gross domestic product in the Northwest Territories is dependent on the mining sector. I know because of my history and because of learning in this House, as well, that, if we find a valuable gold, silver, rare earths, cobalt, whatever it may be, even if we are talking about the green

energy, today, it will take 10 to 15 years from that original find until we have a full-blown mine in operation. We know that our mines are closing down fairly soon. We know we haven't found anything right now. Is it fair of us, we talk about taking care of our future, if we don't promote something in our resource development market, trying to find something today? We are looking at a minimum of 10 to 15 years. That is our legacy we will be leaving to the governments to come.

I also know because I am the Minister of Indigenous Affairs that the money doesn't only stay in the Government of the Northwest Territories. We cost shared those royalties with the Indigenous governments over the last few years. They were making millions off this over the last few years. Because of the decline in our mining sector, their resource-sharing moneys are going down drastically. Every dollar that we put in to helping the Indigenous governments has been used to help. It helps us, too. The more that they get money for Indigenous governments, the more they build their own economy, the less it costs us in issues like public housing, income support, all of those issues.

I really want all Members to really think about this. We talk about our future. Not everybody wants to be a carpenter. Not everybody wants to be a plumber. If we put all our resources in building houses, and I am about building houses, but if we put all our resources there, we talk out a whole sector of people that their employment skills, they might not be wanting to go in that sector. I also know because I am a social worker, you need money to have social programs. I do not want us to end up being a welfare state, Madam Chair. I think that we have to look for resources now. If we don't find resources now, we are in trouble, and we are not helping our children and our future to come. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to thank my colleague from Frame Lake for bringing this motion forward, because it's an interesting process we go through where we all set our priorities and then Cabinet sets the mandate. A lot of that done is done in confidence for good reason, because that's consensus government, but there has to be a public debate on this. Ultimately, I am not in support of the motion because I don't believe we are actually having the debate right now on the Slave Geological Province Corridor. This is \$2.5 million to begin environmental assessment, Madam Chair. Environmental assessment work is fundamental to telling us some more facts about this project, to answering some of the large questions about what its effect will be on the

Bathurst caribou. In our mandate, we say this work is going to carry on until 2024, Madam Chair. I think we have to put these things in perspective, that we have been talking about all of these major infrastructure projects for years, decades in some cases. Largely, they are a dream of the mining industry. It's a dream to expand Taltson, which would find cheaper power, and then put a road through the Slave Geological, then to connect it to Grays Bay Port project, a multibillion-dollar investment that I think we could never afford. There are some valid questions to be asked, you know: if we are going to slowly put money into this, a million dollars here and there, and then it's just going to come to a point where we cannot afford to construct it, would that not have been money better spent?

However, Madam Chair, I think that the environmental assessment work is key to answering some of the questions I have. There are so many what-ifs about this project. Eventually, this Assembly or the next or one of these Assemblies will have a debate on whether to fund that construction, but I do not believe that is the debate we are having at this time. I struggle because we developed these priorities in Caucus and we all did not agree on all of them, but that is the nature of consensus government, so I struggle to now try to remove one of our priorities and to remove essentially a mandate item that was agreed with all 19 Members. Ultimately, there are some huge questions, and I think we have all raised them: the future of mining in the Northwest Territories; will it employ enough Northerners; will it provide benefits to our residents; what will the effect be on the Bathurst caribou herd; is this project viable without the Grays Bay Port project; is it viable without Taltson? I don't actually have answers to these, and I do not believe anyone does because there are a lot of moving variables.

The fact of the matter is that the most important decision in any of this is outside of our controls, and that is commodity prices, Madam Chair. What drives whether this business case makes sense is the price of the minerals we have in the ground. One of the interesting things about this is it also is in Akaitcho territory, which is another huge question mark for me in this process, is that: should we be building a highway through Akaitcho territory, knowing that eventually that will be their land? If this was the decision, to build the highway right now and the Akaitcho was unsettled and the Bathurst caribou was in the state it's in, I would not be in favour of this. However this is the decision whether to do an environmental assessment, which will help me with many of those questions, Madam Chair.

Ultimately, this is also 75 percent funded from the federal government. We have a contribution agreement in place. I keep telling Cabinet: go and get money from the federal government. At some

point, I know we are driven by the allure of 25-cent dollars, and that is a bit of a problem to our sovereignty, but the reality is that, if the feds are willing to give us 25-cent dollars, I will take them. I keep directing Cabinet to do so, so I don't feel comfortable voting to remove what is 75-percent dollars. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. To the motion. Member for Monfwi.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Chair. [Translation] Today, we know this is a big issue. We know for a fact it has been an ongoing issue for a very long time, and now it's in front of us. All of us today, all of the Ministers and MLAs, have spoken, and some support it. Some do not support it. Right now, the federal government had money there. We see \$2.5 million. That is a lot of money that we are looking at, seeing it today, and we see for a fact, in the communities, we know we need training in all communities and departments, and also we know that we have concerns about the caribou because we know, when the mining was to develop a few years ago, there were concerns from the elders about the caribou, all our elders. Right now, we know for a fact that we will be crossing Akaitcho land. Are we giving them support about doing this project? I do not see them standing behind us to begin this project. Right now I see, if we are going to go ahead, right now, at Frank Channel, that has to also be included, but right now that has been put aside and they put this project first. For me, that is not right, and I don't like it. I went to see the Minister this morning, and I talked about what can we do so that we can put forward, put all that forward, because, for myself, I would like to be able to face the people, and this is my work that I do.

So then I ask questions to our own people, my people, and I know for so long our elders had spoken about the caribou, of course, and to protect the caribou for so long, so long, so long, and now, but not with this. The department, with this and the project that is going to happen, it sounds really well, good, because it would be a development. When the Stanton hospital, the Dehcho and all that, you know, we sit, we see all that business, and yet it's all taken and coming out of our territory. Right now, you see the highway that is going into Whati, I want to see a lot of my people working, but I do not see that, and so I see the business, it's not from our territory, and that is what I see right now. What we say and what we do is two different things, Madam Chair. Right now, with this, a winter road, an all-season road, is this good? I have to say there is no guarantee in investment. We build this road. Is there going to be a project going? Is there going to be a development? Is there going to be some more mining development?

Right now, we know for sure that most of the mines are closing, and the only thing that we have is just only on the winter road. A lot of stuff is also happening right now. I know a lot of elders, a few of them are with me. It's like it's unbalanced because right now, when you say (inaudible) in English and on caribou and development, we should be able to see it as one, but at times we don't see that at all. Right now, it's not my language, Madam Chair. Caribou, I am talking about caribou. Right now, there is no caribou in our country today. For that reason, I hear that daily, every time I see an elder. That is for them.

So, with this project, what is going to happen? We have to worry about that, so I have to say so many projects are happening. We have issues like housing, education, today, now virus within Canada and the Northwest Territories, and where is that going? What is going to happen? We are going to spend millions and millions to let disease spread, we hear. Now we hear \$1 billion. In Tlicho, we can't say "1 billion." [English translation not available], you just add million, million, million. Then it's you have to say a billion, but I have to say right now, whatever we have to review, there is so much to do yet. Madam Chair, I really, really am caught in the middle. At times, as for myself, I know I spoke on it yesterday, that bridge at Frank Channel. I would love to see that on the project that is going to happen before what we have in front of us right now. Right now, I see all the Members. Right now, I know that I would have supporters, yes. This, this project that we are talking, it's an issue. It should be second, but now, right now, it's been twisted. Well, what's going to happen if the Frank Channel would go right through right now? How are we going to be able to get anything, access to anywhere at all? We will be stranded here. As a leader, because I live and so I think about stuff like that every day, over the Frank Channel, I see over that. That bridge is over 50 years old, Madam Chair, so many issues to be dealt with.

Right now, this motion that we're in, Frame Lake, thank you very much. Minister, you spoke on, thank you very much. The Minister has a job. They look forward to do their work and their project. Is this the right thing? We're all here, 19, which we would be able to come across these issues, so this is just about as much as I would say right now. Ten million that we see on the paper, and \$2.2 million from GNWT, but some are saying, it's like we're going to do research, and so, maybe much later on, we would see it as a project that would be able to go ahead.

When we begin an issue or even assessment doing research, or maybe we would leave it aside. When you begin, and then, it's like you keep going forward because, and then, you end up with \$1 billion or so,

maybe in about 10 or 15 years, or \$1.5 billion that we would be able to maybe spend.

So, in Tlicho, we don't have a billion in Tlicho, but right now, we don't have that kind of a billion on a piece of paper as GNWT. Our government, and watering down some money to us, so, Madam Chair, we know there will be a motion passed. For now, I am thinking, how I might be able to vote. I said it before, this is not me. I am here for the elders. Most of the elders are not here with us today. They were my great friends, so this is how I am going to vote, thinking of my elders. This is all I'm going to say, Madam Chair. Masi. [End of translation]

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

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. I move that, pursuant to 6(2), Committee of the Whole sit beyond the hour of daily adjournment for the purpose of the continued consideration of Tabled Document 43-19(2).

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): The motion is in order and is non-debatable. I will call the question. All in favour? All opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

We will continue on. Member for Frame Lake? To the motion. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to reiterate some of the comments that were made by my Cabinet colleagues here, and I will be voting against this motion. Part of my responsibilities as the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment is the Income Assistance program. There has been a lot of discussion in this House recently about the Income Assistance program, and particularly about how we can better help those who are Income Assistance clients, how we can help them become self-sufficient. To that end, I've been looking at how we can reform those programs to help make people more self-sufficient, and I can tell you that it's not free. It's going to take money, but I think it's worth it. It's worth pursuing those changes because people on Income Assistance are often just barely getting by. When you're barely getting by, it makes it almost impossible to get ahead.

Right now, the GNWT is on Income Assistance. Our grants from the Government of Canada are Income Assistance payments. While we are making progress in many areas, we have a long way to go. This project is us taking the steps to become self-sufficient. We don't have a big tax base the way

they do in the South. Our government can't generate tons of revenue, so we need these types of projects to help set ourselves up for the future so that we can become self-sufficient, so that we can start seriously addressing some of the social issues that we are all dealing with on a regular basis.

Everyone knows we need more houses. Everyone knows we need better education outcomes, but those all cost money. In many cases, some of those negative social indicators are symptoms, and we can't just keep addressing the symptoms. We have to take big steps to take control and become self-sufficient. I will be voting against this motion, along with my Cabinet colleagues. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister of ECE. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Question has been called. I will give it back to the Member for Frame Lake for any concluding remarks.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I do sincerely want to thank all my colleagues in this House for the debate that we've had. I think this is probably the most important debate that we've had since we've been elected. Unfortunately, it comes at not the greatest time, with a number of other things looming in the background for us, of course.

First off, I want to make it very clear that this motion is not about the other projects that are in the supplementary appropriation. I support the other work that's in here for Inuvik, and I've always been very clear about that. This is about this one part, and it's about removing the funding in the supplementary appropriation for the Slave Geological Province Road.

This is a debate about the future of the Northwest Territories, and the vision that we'll have. We don't all share the same vision, and that's the way it should be. That's part of consensus government, as well. If the only future that we have is pinning all of our hopes on this one project, I wouldn't do it this way. This is about more of the same. This is more about an extraction-based economy moving forward. As my colleague from Yellowknife Centre said, we're not ready for that. Even after devolution, we're not ready for it. We haven't put in place the kinds of systems to make sure that we truly benefit from this scale of resource development. Thirty billion dollars' worth of diamonds have left the Northwest Territories; \$30 billion worth. We have a heritage fund that's \$26 million. We've done a terrible job in terms of distribution of the benefits from diamond mining across generations, across the Northwest Territories. We have not done a good job. I look forward to working with all of my

colleagues of this House to make sure that we change that, that we need to change that, and we need to do that now. It should have been started four years ago. It should have been started 20 years ago, but it didn't, and I'm worried that we're going to fall into the same traps again.

You can look at how Nunavut has approached the federal government, and the kind of relationships that they have developed. Nunavut got a lot more money for housing because, when they went to Ottawa, they talked about housing. That's not what the government did in the last Assembly. They went and talked about big infrastructure projects, and we got dribs and drabs of money, but Nunavut got more money than we did around housing, and that's what I hoped I could encourage our Cabinet to do, the same thing. When they go to Ottawa, housing has to be a top priority, and I think we started to see some evidence of that.

People say that I'm anti-development, and I know I'm going to get criticized for some of the things that I've said here today. I'm not. Our job is to make sure that, when there is resource development, we actually benefit from it. We have to make wise decisions around the priorities, even priorities amongst the three infrastructure projects that were identified when we set the priorities in the mandate. If it was up to me, I would finish the Mackenzie Valley Highway. That's the project that makes most sense. It connects communities, and, if it's done at a scale and pace so that communities can actually benefit from it, given their labour capacity, labour force, that is what I think we can and should be doing.

This project is speculative at best. I understand my colleague from Yellowknife North. This is about getting more information. It is, but I'm just not sure we want to start down that road, so to speak. An example of that is the Mackenzie Valley Highway, which has been in an environmental assessment for six years because it was not well defined. The government leap-frogged ahead and started to do the environmental assessment work before they'd finished the planning work, before they'd lined up the funding. It's been mired in environmental assessment for six years. That is what is going to happen with the Slave Geological Province Road if we don't have the funding lined up, and we don't. I'm just not sure why we want to start to spend money on that right now.

Some people have talked about how the \$2.5 million is a small investment. It's actually not a small investment. That is a quarter of the entire amount that we have to invest in the mandate for this year. It is significant. That is a lot of money. Today, people are going to make the conscious choice of whether they want to spend it on an environmental assessment for a road or other priorities that we

have. That is the decision we are being asked to make here today.

The other couple of things, lessons learned that I want to take away, and I am talking to my Cabinet colleagues in particular, is: you haven't done a good job selling these large infrastructure projects with this side of the House. I think that is shown in the division that we are going to get with the vote here today. You haven't done a good job explaining what those projects are all about, the cost, the benefits, and whether we can afford them or not. People on our side, we need to hold you accountable to that and get better information out of you.

I think that's all I wish to say, Madam Chair. I had requested a recorded vote. As I said, I think this is probably the most important debate that we have had in this House since we have been elected. I know it doesn't come at the best time, so I want to apologize to everybody for putting them through this. This is something we have to do. We have to stand up and be counted, and our residents need to know where we stand on these issues. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Frame Lake has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand and stay standing until you are called.

RECORDED VOTE

COMMITTEE CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Ball): The Member for Frame Lake, the Member for Yellowknife Centre, the Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. All those opposed.

COMMITTEE CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Ball): The Member for Kam Lake, the Member for Yellowknife North, the Member for Monfwi, the Member for Nahendeh, the Member for Yellowknife South, the Member for Sahtu, the Member for Range Lake, the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, the Member for Hay River North, the Member for Hay River South, the Member for Thebacha, the Member for Nunakput.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Abstentions. None. The motion is carried -- defeated. Sorry.

---Laughter

It's a long day, sorry. It's Friday, the 13th. All right, we will be moving on now. Committee, we had three in favour, 12 opposed, no abstentions. The motion was defeated.

---Defeated

I will now go back to 2020-2021 Supplementary Estimates No. 1, Infrastructure Expenditures, infrastructure, capital investment expenditures, asset management, not previously authorized, \$10 million. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All right. Let's move on to 2020-2021 Supplementary Estimates No. 1, Infrastructure Expenditures, infrastructure, capital investment expenditures, programs and services, not previously authorized, \$18,658,000. Questions? Seeing no further questions, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Okay. 2020-2021 Supplementary Estimates No. 1, Infrastructure Expenditures, infrastructure, capital investment expenditures, total department, not previously authorized, \$28,658,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Does committee agree that you have concluded the consideration of Tabled Document 43-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister, and thank you to the witness. You may escort the witness out of the Chamber. Does committee agree that this concludes consideration of Tabled Document 43-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

MR. NORN: Sorry. Did you call the page, Madam Chair? Give me a moment, please.

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

COMMITTEE MOTION 10-19(2):
CONCURRENCE MOTION - TABLED
DOCUMENT 43-19(2): SUPPLEMENTARY
ESTIMATES (INFRASTRUCTURE
EXPENDITURES), NO. 1, 2020-2021, CARRIED

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. I move that consideration of Tabled Document 43-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021, be now concluded and that Tabled Document 43-19(2) be

reported and recommended as ready for further consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. Marsi cho.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Tabled Document 43-19(2) will be reported as ready for consideration in formal bill session through the form of an appropriation bill. What is the wish of committee? Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

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

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? Opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

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

Report of Committee of the Whole

MS. SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 43-19(2), Supplementary Estimates, (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021, and I would like to report that consideration of Tabled Document 43-19(2) is concluded and that the House concur in those estimates and that the appropriation bill to be based thereon be introduced without delay, and, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Do we have a seconder? Member for Thebacha. 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

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Speaker, there will be a meeting of the Caucus in the Caucus room at the rise of the House today. Orders of the day for Monday, March 15, 2020, at 10:00 a.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to 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
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
 - Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates 2020-2021
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 Monday, March 16, 2020, at 10:00 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

