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The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Members of the Legislative Assembly

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Thursday, February 27, 2020

Members Present

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

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr): The Government House Leader is raising a point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order under Rule 24 (h), making allegations against another Member, a House Officer, a witness, or a member of the public; (i) imputes false or hidden motives to another Member; (j) charges another Member with uttering a deliberate falsehood; and/or (k) uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder. I have waited until today to raise this point of order because I wanted to review Hansard.

Yesterday, during Members' Statements, the Member for Monfwi said while speaking of the Honourable Premier, and I quote from page 14 of the unedited Hansard from Wednesday, February 26, 2020:

"Mr. Speaker, the Premier has confused her powers under the Public Service Act with the Minister of Education's powers under the Aurora College Act. In her confusion, I believe she has misled this House and overstepped her authority, in fact breaking the law."

On the same page, the Member also said, and I quote:

"If these statutory realities aren't enough to convince the Premier of the errors of her ways, the Aurora College Act offers one other bit of guidance that should have told her she was exceeding her powers. For added clarity, section 19(3) of the Aurora College Act states that, for greater certainty, the Minister's authority to appoint the president "operates notwithstanding the Public Service Act."

And finally, on the same page, the Member stated, and I quote:

"It should be troubling to this House that the Premier would play so free and easy with something as sanctified as the duly enacted statutes of this House. It makes one wonder where else she might choose to exceed her authority as a Premier. I believe her misconduct warrants an apology to this House and a pledge to us that this will never happen again. Masi, Mr. Speaker."

Additionally, during Question Period, the Member for Monfwi stated at page 31:

"Section 19(3) of the Aurora College Act, which is a law that we follow, "for greater certainty," the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment's authority to appoint and hence terminate the president of Aurora College "operates notwithstanding the Public Service Act."

The Member further stated, and I quote:

"Will Premier Cochrane apologize to this House for overstepping her authority in terminating the Aurora College president?"

And finally, and I quote:

"Masi, Mr. Speaker. Since I am not getting the answer the public is expecting, at a later time, I am tabling a document that is legal advice that I received and let the public decide on this. Masi, Mr. Speaker."

Mr. Speaker, the Member then tabled document 42-19(2): A Legal Opinion from the Deputy Law Clerk regarding the "Legal Authority to terminate the appointment of the Aurora College President."

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Member's words and actions in this Chamber yesterday seriously violate the rules of order and decorum in this House in a variety of ways and I will attempt to separate them and express my concerns.

1. Accusations against another Member/Abusive or Insulting Language Likely to Create Disorder (Rule 24(h) and (k)):

Firstly, Mr. Speaker, the Member has made serious allegations against another Member of this House. The Member has alleged that the Honourable Premier overstepped her authority, misled the House and broke the law. These are very serious

allegations Mr. Speaker. The effect of the Member's words create doubt about the integrity of the Premier and appear to reflect an intent to discredit the Premier in the minds of the public. The effect of this is that the Member has created disorder in this House.

Mr. Speaker, the Member has suggested that the Premier broke the law, and has further suggested that the public should consider that the Honourable Premier is capable of further abuses of authority. Such allegations and suggestions could easily contribute to the public perception that unlawful activities are actually, or at least likely, taking place.

These allegations are serious, Mr. Speaker. Public confidence in good governance is essential. We must take these allegations very seriously as a government.

The Premier, Members of the Executive Council, and, in fact, all Members of this Legislative Assembly are required to operate within the confines of the law.

In addition, our Members are bound by a Code of Ethics that they have agreed to follow.

Mr. Speaker, the remarks from the Member for Monfwi seem to suggest a deep mistrust of government and specifically the Premier that I don't believe are helpful in advancing the business of the Assembly or maintaining a positive working relationship in this House. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the Member's remarks are so serious that they are likely to create disorder in the House.

Maintaining a positive working relationship in this House is critical to the success for the operation of a consensus government. In fact, Mr. Speaker, our own Guiding Principles of Consensus Government in the NWT state that:

"As with all parliamentary systems of government, a healthy level of tension must exist between Cabinet and Regular Members. While the ultimate goal of the Regular Members is not to defeat or discredit Cabinet, it is their job responsibility to review and monitor the leadership and direction of Cabinet and hold it to account."

Mr. Speaker, the Member's accusations against the Premier crossed the line. The Member for Monfwi went well beyond merely holding the Premier to account and instead, it appears as though the remarks were intended to discredit the Premier in the eyes of the public. Mr. Speaker, I believe the Member's remarks used unparliamentary language and violate the established rules and practices of this Assembly.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, in dealing with unparliamentary language, it is not just the words

that matter. In the second edition of the House of Commons Procedure and Practice, 2009, it is noted at page 619 that the tone, manner, and intention of the Member speaking and whether the remarks create disorder in the Chamber also matter.

I believe that anyone listening to the Member's statement and questions yesterday would conclude that he was accusing the Premier of misleading the House and breaking the law. Such allegations create disorder, are un-parliamentary and a violation of the Rules of this Assembly.

2. Imputing False Motives (Rule 24(i))

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Monfwi also implied that there is a likely risk that the Premier would ignore the laws of this territory and intentionally exceed her authority in other circumstances as well. By stating that the Premier would "play free and easy with something as sanctified as the duly enacted statutes of this House" and that "it makes one wonder where else she might choose to exceed her authority as a Premier" implies that the Premier may have false or improper motives in executing her authority under the law.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this crossed a line. Such language is not in the spirit of holding the government to account. Rather, it is an attempt to discredit a fellow Member. It is against the rules of practice of this Assembly. It is unparliamentary and contravenes the guiding principles of consensus government.

3. Suggesting the existence of legal support proving the Premier broke the law (Rule 24(h))
Mr. Speaker, during Question Period the Member for Monfwi stated that "Section 19(3) of the Aurora College Act states that, 'for greater certainty,' the Minister's authority to appoint the president 'operates notwithstanding the Public Service Act.'" The Member also continued, stating "Section 19(3) of the Aurora College Act, which is a law that we follow, 'for greater certainty,' the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment's authority to appoint and hence terminate the president of Aurora College 'operates notwithstanding the Public Service Act.'"

Further, the Member for Monfwi stated that, "Since I am not getting the answer the public is expecting, at a later time, I am be tabling a document that is legal advice that I received and let the public decide on this."

Mr. Speaker, I believe the Member's comments in this regard suggest a likelihood that the Member had legal authority holding that the Premier broke the law. Mr. Speaker, this is inaccurate. The document tabled by the Member is a legal opinion. It is not legal authority. The tabling of legal opinions

are exceptionally rare. The document tabled offers consideration of who has the authority to terminate an appointment. It does not fully consider who has the authority to terminate an employment relationship, which is a critical distinction.

I believe the Member for Monfwi's comments in this regard were inappropriate and unparliamentary.

Therefore, based on all of the evidence above, Mr. Speaker, I respectfully suggest that the Member be directed to withdraw his remarks made during Members' Statements and question period and apologize to this House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Government House Leader. I will now allow comments on this point of order. Member for Monfwi. To the point of order, first, and then we will deal with the point of privilege. We will allow debate on the point of order, and then once we conclude that will be the point of privilege. Member for Monfwi.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] Today, we are talking about something very important regarding these regulations. We have a big issue in front of us. When we talk about legislation, it is the law that we follow by. This is the law we follow, but when we take a look at this, when we say Aurora College Act, it looks like we did not follow the rules. Section 19(1), it states that the Minister is supposed to speak to the board first, and they were supposed to make that decision. That was the process, although I don't know all the evidence of this, but that is the question I questioned.

I had a legal opinion regarding the Legislative Assembly. That is what was given to me. When I received this statement, that is what I made a statement on regarding Aurora College president: who was the one to make that decision? In my opinion, it is supposed to be the Minister's right, and the associate deputy minister is a separate issue. It may be up to the Premier regarding that position, but the president has its own regulation. It is the 19 Members here that we make a statement on that. We want everyone to know. I understand this is a big issue now. It is something very important in front of us, and now we have to make a decision on this to take a look at all the whole process of what happened. I want to get to the bottom of it.

There are a lot of people in the Northwest Territories, 33 communities in the Northwest Territories. There are approximately 40,000 members. We like to hear what people think. We know. We want to be accountable and transparent to all of the membership. That is how this government is supposed to work. We are supposed to be accountable to each, the people of the Northwest Territories. If we have an issue, we try to

resolve it as soon as possible. We talk about transparency, as well. We want everything to be open. Sometimes, it is not like that.

Mr. Speaker, my statement is recorded here, and also it is the questions that are coming from the communities. The people are the ones who elect us to be here, to be their representative, to speak on their behalf. We have a Premier and their Cabinet. I am not trying to say that they are not doing their job, but there is a process that is not quite accurate. I feel that something is not quite right. For me, if everything went the way it is supposed to go, following all these regulations, I would have no problem, but the way I see it, there are some things that are not quite right.

Mr. Speaker, it will be up to you now to make a decision on this point of order. We make big decisions here in this House to represent our membership, and we want to make sure that we represent them properly and to make a good decision for our people. We are trying to make the best decision and make it right. This is not the only thing that happened. There are other things that happens, as well, but when I take a look at this, I don't want anything like this to happen again. It is the reason why I am saying this, to prevent it for the future.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot has been said. I speak for my people. I cannot sit back and say nothing about it. I want the truth to come out. I also will table a document, and I will make a statement on it, but today, I was not expecting this point of order. They did not tell us this was going to happen. I was going to table a document, and I did let the Premier know, notify her that I was going to do this. Sometimes, things are done without our knowledge, and we were not notified. I don't agree with that. We need to have respect for each other, and it seems like it is not happening now.

Mr. Speaker, that will be my statement. I have said a lot of things. My words are recorded, as well. People are concerned about this. There are a lot of people who don't agree with this. I don't know this president personally; maybe I met him once or twice. I am not really supporting what they have done to him, but what I am trying to make a point of is the whole process of hiring and firing. These are the laws that we are supposed to follow. That is what I am speaking on, on this. This is the opinion of the lawyer. I have said previously, I did make a statement on this, and I would like to tell you again that there are a lot of people out there who are worried about this. In this House, when we make decisions, we need to follow process, so it will be up to you to make a final decision. Masi, Mr. Speaker. [End of translation]

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. I will open up the floor to debate on the point of order. Minister of Justice.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The laws in the Northwest Territories aren't one above another. They are meant to work as a whole. They are meant to work as a unit. They are meant to be read together, Mr. Speaker, and they are meant to work together, which is not to say that they don't necessarily sometimes come into conflict one with another and that we are asked to interpret them in order to then back away to read them in concert one with another. Laws about jurisdiction, any jurisdiction in Canada, are meant to be interpreted in a way that they are consistent one with another. Rules of statutory interpretation help guide that exercise. They help provide us the ground rules around which we can interpret what sometimes seem like conflicting pieces of legislation, sometimes conflicting parts within legislation. Lawyers are often called upon to apply those rules and to try to provide opinions that, in fact, can help us understand what conflicting provisions mean, what specific provisions mean, and can help understand how to apply those different provisions depending on the circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, a legal opinion is just that. It is an opinion, at the end of the day, based on one's professional judgment and best efforts, but it is still just an opinion. The final authority on any legal interpretation is done by the judiciary; it is done by the judicial branch of government, not by the executive or the legislative, and not by any lawyer. That is part of the division of responsibilities that we have. One of the examples of a piece of legislation, or parts within a legislation, that has perhaps led to quite a bit of challenge within the House, Mr. Speaker, in fact, is, of course, the Public Service Act and the Aurora College Act, and specific provisions around the hiring of the president.

These two acts deal with two very different things. The Public Service Act, at its core, of course deals with the provisions around hiring and governance of the public service. More specifically, Section 16.1 of the Public Service Act confers an exclusive authority on the Premier to make a recommendation for the appointment of all deputy minister roles. In other words, Mr. Speaker, it is only the Premier who can hire or terminate someone within a role of a deputy minister.

Meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, the Aurora College Act, under Section 19, confers on the Minister of Education an authority, with consultation of the board, to appoint a president of the Aurora College. Section 2 makes the president of the Aurora College a public servant. That is important, Mr. Speaker, because most employees of the Aurora

College are not public servants. Then Section 19(3) says that this happens notwithstanding what is in the Public Service Act, which makes some sense, Mr. Speaker, because, of course, as I have said earlier, it is the Public Service Act generally that would govern creating any kind of employment relationship within the public service. Whereas, in this case, someone who is the president becomes a public servant.

However, Mr. Speaker, someone who becomes a public servant by appointment as president does not become a deputy minister. The deputy minister authority, again, that lies exclusively on the recommendation of the Premier. So, unfortunately - "unfortunately" is maybe a bit too strong. The reality is that you have sort of two different things happening, Mr. Speaker. You have deputy ministers being appointed under the exclusive recommendation of the Premier, and meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, you have the president of the Aurora College being appointed under the Aurora College Act. The president becomes a member of the public service, but not every public servant is a deputy minister, and certainly not every deputy minister becomes the president of Aurora College.

Unfortunately in this case, Mr. Speaker, this has certainly given rise to a fair bit of confusion, perhaps, and uncertainty, and led to a lot of attempts to explain in this House what has occurred when someone who was holding those two dual roles has ultimately been terminated, and whether, in fact, the Premier had the authority to terminate someone in the role of a deputy minister.

Mr. Speaker, in my view, someone who is in the role of a deputy minister can only be terminated by the Premier, which is separate and apart from the fact that someone who happens to hold a statutory appointment as president of Aurora College, that statutory appointment would be terminated by the Minister responsible; but it doesn't change or impede or take away from the authority of the Premier to terminate a deputy minister, or to make the recommendation, rather, to terminate a deputy minister. Because, again, that is the only role that has that authority to make that judgment to do that thing, and that is exactly what the Premier had done in this case and has described having done in this case. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Justice. Colleagues, we are dealing with a point of order raised by the Government House Leader. We are not debating who had the authority to dismiss whom. Did the Member for Monfwi breach our rules in his comments yesterday? That is what we are debating at the moment, so it is still open. There are no further comments? Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we come and represent our people on the floor of the House, we are passionate about what we are doing here. We want to be here to help. On the point of order, I think that the "working together" part of the House, I mean, we could bring up anything we want on the floor, anything. It is up to the Member who wanted to bring something forward who is passionate about it and wanting to seek clarity. That is all that I think that was. Working together, it is in black and white, Mr. Speaker. I really think that this House, all the Members, have to reflect why we are here and make sure that we are here for the right reason. For myself, I really think that my colleague Mr. Lafferty has compassion for doing his job and he is good at what he does. I think that we have to take a step back and try to get through this, because we have another four weeks, and try to make the best of what we have while we are sitting here and not wasting House time. It is in black and white on what happened, and I leave that up to your discretion, Mr. Speaker. This is your House. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Any other debate? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I hadn't actually thought I would get up and say anything. I know this is the way that the rules work, but I just feel that I am at a distinct disadvantage, not having had notice of the point of order before we got into the House today or just very shortly before we got into the House.

My honourable friends on the other side have cited a number of legal sections of the acts and so on, so I really feel at a disadvantage in terms of being able to examine the record here and, perhaps, offer some advice to you.

I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that you do go back and carefully review what was said in the House over this sitting to see what the Premier said about the removal of the individual, and in what capacity she was acting, what capacity the Minister was acting, and so on. I do think that there is a point of public interest in this, and I have every confidence that you will review the record very carefully, but I would prefer that we have more notice on this side of the House on these sort of matters so that we can actually offer some informed advice to you in carrying out your role. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Any other debate? Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My thoughts on this: I am echoing what Member from Frame Lake said about getting notice for the point of order. I think we as Members, when we first got to the

House, we are going to work together. I think we have got to continue to do that and not to surprise each other because we give that courtesy across the other side, and we expect the same thing in return. We did not get that today. That is not right.

On that note, about this whole issue, for me, personally, it wasn't too much on my radar, but the more I thought about it, I have four tenets, and I kind of have a couple of other things that I go by when something comes across my desk. One, is it legal? Two, is it practical? Three, is it ethical? Four, is it affordable? Anytime I see a document come across my desk, I look at that, and I think we should all look at that in the same light. Another thing I like to look at is: one, is it beneficial for my constituents? Most importantly, is it beneficial for the territories? We should think about that when we go about looking at this issue. That is what I would like to say about this, and I think we should try to be as objective as possible and, again, work with each other and remember who we are serving. Mahsi cho.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Any further debate on the point of order? Seeing none. Thank you. I will take the point of order on advisement, and I will get back to the House on the ruling as soon as possible. Thank you. Member for Monfwi.

POINT OF PRIVILEGE

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] I have a point of privilege. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak on my point of privilege. When we look at the position of the Premier, it is a big position. It is a huge job, and also the president of Aurora College has its own rules and regulations in place. The decision the Premier has made, we want to know exactly what happened. The way we have these recorded information, I will read it in English because I want it properly recorded. We do have a really good interpreter, but I will say this one in English. [Translation ends]

Mr. Speaker, I have a point of privilege affecting this Assembly. The Premier has acted outside her statutory authority by terminating the appointment of the president of Aurora College without the statutory authority to do so. The Premier's action are in direct contravention of Section 19 of the Aurora College Act. In doing so, she has breached the collective privileges of this House done against the dignity and authority of this Assembly as per Rule 20 of the Rules of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I bring this question to the Assembly, to the attention of this Assembly at the earliest opportunity to do so after receiving legal advice from independent counsel that was laid before the House yesterday when I

tabled the document 40-19(2) and upon review of the Premier's response to my questions in Hansard from yesterday's proceedings.

Mr. Speaker, the rule of law as commonly defined as the principles whereby all Members of a society, including those in government, are considered equally subject to publicly disclosed legal codes and processes. In brief, Mr. Speaker, it means that no one, absolutely no one, is above the law, especially the elected lawmakers, even more, so Ministers of the Crown.

When the Premier decided to take a statutory role of the Minister of Education on the administration of the Aurora College Act, she violated this fundamental principle of our society, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is a gravely serious matter in that an act in contempt of our laws is to act in contempt of the Assembly that makes them. The authority of this Assembly has been overridden by the actions of this Premier with the consequences that she has obstructed the ability of legislature in carrying out the lawmaking functions.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has repeatedly refused to accept that she erred in impeding the statutory authority of one of her Ministers. Appropriate sanctions must be sought to curb this behaviour, to restore the integrity of the rule of law, and to ensure that we continue to live up to the highest standards, probity, integrity, accountability of our actions as elected officials.

Mr. Speaker, clearly, like all Members across this floor here, I was hoping for real positive changes within our government, an accountable government, a transparent government, but not this, Mr. Speaker. We cannot continue operating this way for our people. There are so many questions from myself and from the public, as well. They hold us in high regards when we make decisions for them across the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, I await your decision on this very important matter, and I will respect your decision. Masi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Thank you. I will now allow the Honourable Premier to speak to the point raised.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to start by raising the point that points of privilege should be raised at the earliest possible time. This issue has been raised now for a number of weeks. This point could have been raised earlier. If there was an issue related to the timing of the legal opinion, I note it was dated February 12th, more than two weeks ago. Mr. Speaker, nothing in the present circumstances have prevented the Assembly from being able to

fulfill its duties. The hiring and firing of associate deputy ministers and their statutory appointments of officials are not matters that relate to functions and duties of the Assembly. I have responded to questions in this Assembly related to a sensitive human resources matter to the extent that is appropriate.

Mr. Speaker, I have even offered briefings to help the Member better understand the steps and processes involved in ending an employment relationship. I continue to disagree that anything done in relation to this matter lacked the proper authority, did not follow any required steps, or broke the law.

I terminated an employment relationship of an associate deputy minister who also had a statutory appointment as the president of Aurora College under the Aurora College Act. The steps required to terminate that employment relationship were followed. The steps to terminate the statutory appointment have also been followed with the revocation of that appointment by the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. The termination of that appointment instrument will appear in the Gazette shortly. MLAs should be aware of the nature of statutory appointments.

I know that the Member of Monfwi made hundreds of statutory appointments during his time as Minister. This did not mean he had the authority to terminate any employment relationship for such appointment holders. The revocations of such appointments always follow the termination of the employment agreement.

The confusion over this matter is both frustrating and unfortunate, but it should not affect the proper functioning of this House. I regret that we are again taking up valuable time over what appears to be confusion over the paperwork required to affect the termination of an appointment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. It is my duty as Speaker to determine whether a prima facie case of privilege has been made. That is, whether on the face of it, the matter is as it appears to be, a matter of privilege, or whether the matter was raised at the first possible opportunity. I will take this matter under advisement and provide a ruling at a later date. Thank you. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 20-19(2): AIRPORT IMPROVEMENTS

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Sorry, my apologies. Which one to start with, here. Airport

improvements. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Making strategic investments in our transportation system is one of the priorities of the 19th Legislative Assembly. Investing in airport improvements will keep our communities connected while reducing the cost of living and supporting economic opportunities. Given our vast territory and dispersed communities, air travel is essential for northern residents, businesses, and tourists.

The Government of the Northwest Territories manages 27 public airports that support vital services, including community resupply, air ambulance, search and rescue, forest fire response, and much more. Investing in our airports not only improves the delivery of safe and efficient transportation, but also provides jobs, skills, training, and beneficial economic opportunities for communities and residents. In fact, a total of 158 Northerners are directly employed through our airports. This does not include jobs created through special projects, such as capital construction projects.

Mr. Speaker, today, I am pleased to provide an update on airport improvement projects throughout the Northwest Territories. Beginning in Inuvik, there are three major projects planned for the Mike Zubko Airport. These include:

- a new air terminal building;
- improvements to help protect permafrost and improve runway drainage; and
- the design of an extension to the existing runway.

When the new air terminal building is completed, travellers will notice an improved passenger experience and an airport that better fits their needs. This includes upgraded public spaces, baggage systems, food concessions, airline operations, and improved accessibility. The Government of the Northwest Territories is working to keep the public informed and to provide opportunities for dialogue with residents and businesses. This month the Department of Infrastructure held two public meetings and one contractor meeting in Inuvik to discuss the new air terminal building. The project is already providing a boost to local employment, as a local business was contracted to demolish the pre-existing hangar on the build site. Construction of the new air terminal building is expected to be complete as soon as 2023.

The second project at the Inuvik Airport will result in airfield upgrades to protect permafrost and improve drainage. A total of \$22 million in federal and territorial funding was announced last year for this project under the Disaster Mitigation and

Adaptation Fund. This project will make the airport more resilient to the effects of climate change, one of the priorities of this Legislative Assembly. The runway and taxiway embankments will be reconstructed to better protect the permafrost under the airport. Surface drainage improvements will also help direct water away from vulnerable areas. Design work for the airfield improvement projects is currently underway and is expected to be completed this fall. Once the design has been finalized, construction is expected to take approximately two years.

Mr. Speaker, design work begins this summer on the Inuvik Airport runway extension project. Last year, the federal government announced funding of up to \$150 million for the project. This funding will be spread out over five years and will deliver major upgrades, including extending the length of the runway from 6,000 to 9,000 feet long. The project includes modernizing the lighting, navigational, and military aircraft landing arrestor systems. This investment will support a greater variety of military aircraft while reducing the strain on aircraft that already serve the airport. The runway extension will help increase Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic and benefit local travelers and businesses that rely on this airport.

Mr. Speaker, for many communities across the North, air travel is an essential service. For this reason, airport maintenance and improvement activities are particularly important to ensure safe and efficient travel. With this in mind, the Department of Infrastructure is also completing work at some of our smaller airports. For example, we are undertaking drainage improvements at Sachs Harbour, Aklavik, Hay River, and Samba K'e airports. This work will increase the resiliency of these airports to the effects of climate change.

Mr. Speaker, improvements are also ongoing at the Yellowknife Airport. As the largest and busiest aviation gateway to the North, Yellowknife Airport continues to focus on improvements for travellers as well as new economic opportunities. The airport recently transitioned to common-use terminals, which will allow airlines to share counter space based on flight schedules, creating increased flexibility and better use of the check-in area. Upgrades were also recently completed to the baggage system and security screening areas of the airport, underscoring our commitment to a safe and secure facility.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to improvements to the passenger experience, the airport has been busy making operational improvements. While not always visible to the public, these investments are crucial to the safe and efficient operation of airports. To help define long-term goals at the Yellowknife

Airport, a 20-year master plan will be finalized in the coming months.

In addition to these improvements at the Yellowknife Airport, our government is also pursuing economic opportunities related to cold-weather testing. Most recently, Airbus chose the Yellowknife Airport to test their newest aircraft: the Airbus A220. Our frigid temperatures make us the perfect destination for this type of testing. The A220 is already certified to minus 35 Celsius, but Airbus wants to certify the jet for minus 40 Celsius, which is why they brought it to Yellowknife. Airbus officials indicated the weather was ideal during their visit, and I thank the many northern businesses and support groups who worked to make this opportunity possible.

Going forward, the airport is focused on attracting more cold-weather testing opportunities. To support this, a dedicated working group has been established at the airport to provide resources and assist aeronautical decision-makers. Through this group's work, the NWT can provide a wealth of knowledge for companies looking to test their equipment in the North.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories will continue to invest in all of our airports. By working closely with communities and the federal government to secure funding, we will keep our communities connected while supporting opportunities for Northerners. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Culture.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 21-19(2): ROUND-UP OF ROUNDUP

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Because I didn't talk enough already, here is my presentation here.

The 19th Legislative Assembly has identified increasing resource exploration and development for the benefit of the people of the Northwest Territories, as a priority for this government. In January, I attended the Association for Mineral Exploration Roundup in Vancouver with Premier Cochrane, Minister Thompson, and staff from the departments of Infrastructure, Industry, Tourism and Investment, Environment and Natural Resources, Executive and Indigenous Affairs, and Lands in an effort to advance the interests of the NWT and work towards attaining this goal. We often talk about the benefits mines bring to a territory. Our mines are huge operations requiring numerous products and services and large, diverse workforces. This means economic opportunities

and benefits that begin to flow to NWT residents, long before mines even open, in exploration activity and geoscience research spurred by the search for precious stones and minerals.

This is the focus of Roundup. It is one of Canada's largest mining conferences that draws delegates from around the world, including Government of the Northwest Territories staff representing a number of departments and representatives from Northwest Territories Indigenous governments and development corporations. It is an event that I first attended as an engineering student at the University of British Columbia, and it was then and continues to be today an important opportunity to promote our resource potential and strong partnership model to those who want to work with us to sustain and enhance our economy.

Mr. Speaker, exploration spending in our territory is projected to have decreased again last year to around \$78 million. In past years, it has been as high as \$150 to \$200 million. It is a critical investment that is missing in our economy. This is something that we have already said needs to be a priority for our government. It is money that is spent on helicopters, equipment, camps, and supplies. If exploration companies need it, they buy it, and Northwest Territories companies are the benefactors. Just like the mines that they precede, exploration crews and logistics companies also hire locally, not just geologists and geophysicists, but expeditors, line cutters, stakers, cooks, technicians, camp attendants, ramp hands, cleaners, and labourers.

Mr. Speaker, our government's approach for this year's Roundup was to highlight the enormous potential that exists for those willing to be a part of responsible development in our territory and to demonstrate, in tangible terms, the partnerships that we believe will realize new exploration opportunities. We set the stage for our attendance this year by introducing an updated bedrock geology map and database for the mineral-rich Slave Geological Province, which is well known for its excellent mineral potential and the long, prosperous history of mining.

On the Sunday preceding Roundup, Premier Cochrane helped to launch an exciting new partnership for our North. Backed by the Government of Canada and supported by Canada's three territorial governments, the Invest Canada North initiative will see a robust presence from northern Canada at the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada Convention, taking place in Toronto next week, that will focus exclusively on promoting investment opportunities in Canada's North to national and international audiences.

As the business of Roundup got under way, two important media events showcased our territory's innovation and leadership in partnered, Indigenous-led resource development. I want to recognize the leadership of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, Det'on Cho Corporation, and Cheetah Resources. Their agreement to begin Canada's first rare earth mining project, with the first Indigenous-led mine site, could be a game-changer, not just for our territory, but for our country. I also want to congratulate the Gwich'in Tribal Council and Inuvialuit Regional Corporation again for the release of their regional mineral development strategies. These strategies will serve both as roadmaps for mineral explorers and action plans for Indigenous governments as they seek to attract investment on their terms.

There were also a number of formal meetings and informal networking events during Roundup where the Premier, Minister Thompson, and I spoke to the priority that our government will be giving to revitalizing exploration and development in our territory. We highlighted our continuing work to implement new mineral legislation, updated industry representatives on transformative infrastructure projects that are taking shape, and listened proactively to concerns that were raised by our partners. At every step, Mr. Speaker, we were able to point to economic reconciliation in action. Our ongoing work with Indigenous governments was alongside of us, clearly communicated as part of and in step with our own government's presence.

Mr. Speaker, it was a powerful message, and it served to solidify the purpose of coming out in force to events like Roundup. We need to take tangible steps to improve the investment landscape in our territory. It is going to take more than just one Minister, one department, or one government.

The annual Roundup conference remains an excellent opportunity to build relationships and seek out new partnerships which will build and benefit our territory. I am pleased with the work of the Government of the Northwest Territories at this year's event and confident that, in addition to highlighting our political support for this sector, we were also able to demonstrate that the 19th Legislative Assembly is committed to reaching goals and making decisions in a more transparent and collaborative manner. I look forward to our government building on these successes at the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada Convention and through the Invest Canada North initiative that begins this Sunday in Toronto, and will be happy to update the House and the public of those successes in the near future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Colleagues, I would like to recognize former Member for Kam

Lake, Kieron Testart, who is with us in the House today. Also, Denise McDonald from Inuvik. Welcome. Also, last but not least, our former Clerk of the Legislative Assembly and our first Ombud of the Northwest Territories, Ms. Colette Langlois. Welcome. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Monfwi.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FRANK CHANNEL BRIDGE

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] I want to talk about the Deh Cho bridge. I believe we are going to create a big bridge in the Tlicho Nation. Now, it has been almost 50 years since we have a winter road that a lot of people are using, and this is the statement I want to make today. [End of translation] Since the Deh Cho Bridge is now completed and well-used today, I would like to highlight and also talk about the Tlicho Bridge, also known as the Frank Channel Bridge.

Mr. Speaker, the Frank Channel Bridge is a vital part of the highway lifeline connecting Yellowknife and the North Slave region to the rest of the territory and to southern Canada. All car and truck traffic into the territorial capital must pass over this bridge that we have, the Frank Channel Bridge. In excess of 20,000 people depend on this bridge for groceries, fuel, building materials, and other essentials of life, not to mention the needs of industry, especially the diamond mines.

The Frank Channel Bridge is more than half a century old, well past its prime, Mr. Speaker. I suspect not a single bolt or girder of the original structure remains, so much of it has been replaced over the years, but there comes a time when band-aids on band-aids no longer work. For the Frank Channel Bridge, that time has come.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very important infrastructure for our territory; for my region, as well. It does connect us to the South and it is a main gateway, so this is a very important infrastructure, not only for my region, but for the whole territory. I will have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure at the appropriate time. Masi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON VICTIM SERVICES PROGRAM ISSUES AND REVIEW

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. In the last Assembly, the Minister of Justice agreed to carry out a comprehensive review of Victim Services. There are basically three programs; the

Victims Assistance Fund, which receives the victims of crime surcharges, which are then used for application-based project. This program is working well, although there is an opening balance of \$351,000 as of April 1, 2019, as shown in the most recent annual report tabled in this House.

The second program is the network of Victim Services coordinators that are funded through contribution agreements with the Department of Justice. This system has been in place since 1996 and there are currently eight community-based Victim Services coordinators with outreach positions in Hay River and Inuvik dedicated to serving communities without resident Victim Services providers. These coordinators, other service providers, and volunteers provide victims of crime in their communities with information, assistance, support, and referrals to community support services. Support is also supposed to be available to victims of crime in surrounding communities by phone.

It is my understanding that the number of service contacts with victims has more than doubled over the last five years. Given that this program is delivered through contribution agreements, there appears to be some issues with regard to consistency of support for the coordinators themselves, access to resources to support victims, and thus the need for a comprehensive review, along with more funding to complete the network and provide services to all of our communities.

The third program is the Victims of Crime Emergency Fund, which provides financial assistance to victims of serious violent crime. Although the program has eligibility criteria, there is apparently some discretion for justice officials. I understand that about \$40,000 per year is available for the victims of serious violent crime.

I will have questions for the Minister of Justice on the status of the review of Victim Services and how this government intends to improve support for the victims of family violence and other crimes. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NUNAKPUT ELDERS AGING IN PLACE

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2015, the Aurora Research Institute did a study at the request of the NWT Seniors Society on Influences on the Quality of Life of the Older Adult in the Northwest Territories. This study found that Indigenous elders have a better quality of life when they feel connected and supported; active and independent; and safe and secure through a

traditional lifestyle, which is bound in place at home. That is why it is so important that the government do everything it can to make sure that our elders have living places in their home communities and can access support and programs as their needs change with age.

The 19th Legislative Assembly identified enabling seniors to age in place with dignity as one of its key priorities. In the mandate, government is committing to have 10 percent more seniors with access to housing programs beginning in the summer of 2021. In the meantime, the mandate has set aside more than an entire year for the government to identify gaps. Mr. Speaker, I can help them do that before this summer comes, never mind next summer. I want to invite the Ministers of ECE, Health and Social Services, and the Housing Corporation to come to Nunakput to meet with the elders in some of my communities. It won't take long to figure out their needs.

Their needs are simple. They need access to safe, appropriate housing, where they can be near their families and friends, but where they can also feel safe from abuse when they have family troubles. They need access to affordable insurance, or they need the Housing Corporation to relax some of its policy requirements, so that simple repairs can be made without the need for insurance. They need to know that they can travel, hassle-free, with family members, when they need to travel outside their communities for medical care. They need access to palliative care and to die at home with dignity when the time comes.

I am ready and willing to work with the Ministers who have these responsibilities under this mandate item to make good things happen on the ground for the elders of Nunakput. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MEDICAL TRAVEL

MR. NORN: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Today, I would like to speak about medical travel services with the Department of Health and Social Services. It seems that medical travel is quickly becoming one of the top issues that my constituents have to deal with. I am constantly, almost on a daily basis, hearing from constituents about various issues they have experienced in regard to medical travel. Among the issues I have seen, there seems to be confusion about the filing of paperwork; it is too complicated. The reimbursement of claims taking excessive amounts of time to be returned to residents; and, of course, there is the issue of medical escorts being denied.

I can understand the reasons for a minor waiting period between date of submission of a reimbursement claim and the date the reimbursement is received by the resident. However, there are several cases I have seen within my riding alone where this waiting period is simply too long for some people. I have many constituents who are on a very tight budget and income, as it is in a lot of our small communities, so even the slightest deviation from their regular spending habits can affect them for months on end. Simply put, the long waiting periods for residents to receive their medical travel reimbursements is too long, and in some cases, it is harmful.

I strongly and respectfully urge the Department of Health and Social Services to review this element of their medical travel program, the waiting period, because some of our vulnerable people are once again falling through the cracks.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I am told by constituents that some of the forms associated with medical travel and medical escorts can be difficult to understand. In other words, the forms are not user-friendly enough and should be simplified a little more and be more accessible for people. It seems like sometimes you will have to sit with a CGA, a certified general accountant, just to get through some of these forms. It should not be that way.

There is one example here. When I was helping one constituent fill out her medical travel paperwork, there was one form that she needed which was not readily available online, and it took the Department of Health several hours to obtain a copy. I think that these types of barriers can be easily fixed by our government and can potentially save time and resources in the future by not having to walk through all the medical travel paperwork with residents as much as we do today. I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services later today. Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HEALTHCARE SERVICES IN DEH CHO COMMUNITIES

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My Member's statement today is regarding healthcare service in my community of Fort Providence and in the communities in my riding, which include Kakisa, K'atlodeeche, and Enterprise. This may also go for the other communities in the Northwest Territories, which may or may not have health centres. I believe the level of healthcare is concerning for the residents of the Northwest Territories. This issue most likely has been raised in every prior

Assembly, with Members stating the problems with healthcare in our communities or lack thereof.

Everyone talks of fixing the healthcare system. I came to this Assembly with the mindset that I could make a difference in fixing the healthcare system. I want to have improved and simplified paperwork for medical travel right at the local health centre. I want to see better and improved diagnosis of patients at the local health centre. I want to see better health care service to the communities of Enterprise, K'atlodeeche, and Kakisa, and for the Northwest Territories as a whole.

I have had patients complain to me about being misdiagnosed for their ailment. They were seen by a nurse practitioner and sent home with a pill for the pain. Most have been back to the health centre four or five times, and only when their ailment was at a critical stage, they were shipped out. Most patients had to ship themselves out, with the assistance of a relative, for a serious misdiagnosis. People were afraid to go to a certain nurse practitioner for fear of not receiving the best healthcare that should be afforded to our people. This is very alarming to say the least.

Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the health Minister at the appropriate time. Mahsi cho.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ALCOHOL STRATEGY

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, I spoke about the analysis by Harold Johnson of the harm alcohol abuse is doing in his northern Saskatchewan community. I could have been talking about the Northwest Territories. The problems are similar of binge drinking with terrible consequences. Today, I am going to talk about another approach to alcohol harm reduction that is informed by academic research.

The Canadian Alcohol Policy Evaluation project, known as CAPE, has quantified the costs of alcohol harm in the Northwest Territories at \$56 million a year. That is \$30 million more than we take in from alcohol sales. On their 2017 report card, we scored a failing grade on alcohol policy, mostly because we don't have a full and effective set of alcohol policies. Clearly, we have some work to do.

Mr. Speaker, we can get started by creating an alcohol strategy that provides an independent and evidence-based approach to public health policy. CAPE has identified seven areas which provide the best direct results for harm reduction. Alcohol pricing is one promising area. CAPE recommends a

minimum price per standard drink for both on and off-premises sales, adjusted annually to keep up with inflation. A second area is one I have talked about before, which is to persuade doctors to do a screening, brief intervention, and referral with their patients who may need help with alcohol abuse. A third area is to move responsibility for the liquor commission into the department of health so there is some consistency around health and safety messaging.

It is not all bad news. CAPE gives the NWT credit for the graduated licensing program for new drivers because of its zero tolerance for blood alcohol content during the first year they have a license, and it is worth noting the NWT is one of only two jurisdictions that have mandatory health warning labels on alcohol cans and bottles.

Mr. Speaker, as legislators, we could do nothing and watch as the harm continues, or we could be the leaders this issue needs by supporting the development of a strategy with dedicated funding, an identified leader with a public health focus, and robust implementation and monitoring. We need to bring to an end simply picking up the pieces leftover from the harms of alcohol, and focus on prevention. I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON YELLOWKNIFE MOTOR VEHICLES OFFICE HOURS

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I wish to speak about the hours of service for the Yellowknife Department of Motor Vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, a number of my platform points that I campaigned on currently lie dead in the water. I won't walk out of here in four years having delivered universal basic income or universal daycare. However, in my platform, I had a number of smaller, very simple changes, and hopefully, after four years of persistence, I can get the Yellowknife Department of Motor Vehicles to be open evenings or weekends, Mr. Speaker.

Firstly, I would like to begin by acknowledging that the Yellowknife Department of Motor Vehicles office has put more and more services online, which has reduced wait times. They are accessible 24 hours a day, but there are a still a number of services you have to go into the office for. I have been trying to change the address on my driver's licence for years. In this town, which is a government town, if you work government hours but government services are only available those same hours, you

find yourself having to take a day off simply to catch up on bureaucratic paperwork.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when I do a jurisdictional scan, it is clear: Edmonton, open 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., seven days a week. You can go in after supper and renew your driver's licence. A number of jurisdictions; Ottawa, Thursday, they pick one night a week where they are open evenings and then a few hours on Saturday. Mr. Speaker, I believe we can accomplish this in the next four years.

One of the barriers to this is: we can't simply ask a GNWT employee to start two hours later, which would allow the DMV to be open two hours later, because we run into the collective agreement. I believe in the collective agreement, which serves the members who work in the public service, but in a government town where they have to then go access those services, it actually becomes a barrier. I have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure on whether we can add some flexibility into the collective agreement that allows our services to be open evenings and weekends. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON DRUG TRAFFICKING IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I would like to talk about something that we hear about almost weekly in the news in the NWT, drug-related charges, offences. In Inuvik, at a recent town council meeting, it was reported 69 reports of possible drug trafficking in 2019 compared to 15 in 2018. This was according to the RCMP stats in January. In an article on February 13th, CBC quoted Constable Chris Main out of Inuvik: "In recent years, the Northwest Territories as a whole has seen a dramatic increase in the presence of drug trafficking, and Inuvik has been no exception to this," and reports to Inuvik RCMP of alleged drug trafficking shot up in 2019, more than quadrupling the number from the year before.

He also said the jump in this is the direct result of people choosing to alert the police about specific drug traffickers. Reports from the public work as a compass, he said. They help direct police toward certain locations or people.

Traffickers are coming up from provinces. Main has stated that criminal organizations, often from provinces, have set up operations in a number of NWT communities. "These groups rotate in and out of the communities, often with one drug trafficker

replacing another," he said, adding they mostly deal in crack cocaine and powder cocaine.

"Particularly troubling for the police," said Main, "is that the traffickers are regularly using people's homes as bases for their operations, exploiting residents who are already living with addictions and poverty." Traffickers, he added, will seek out people who are isolated and who won't speak out against them. I would like to thank the RCMP in our community who are taking action on this, as well as the residents who are brave in reporting this to the RCMP.

Mr. Speaker, these drugs are coming in by road, by air. How can we, as a government, stop this? I don't know, but I do know that it is a problem. I see that the RCMP are doing their part, and the residents are doing their part. If we can provide local, culturally-relevant healing and focused aftercare in support for our residents who are struggling with addictions, we may see less and less of these news release headlines and do our part as government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Members' Statements. Member for Kam Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MUNICIPAL FUNDING GAP

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For four years, the regular Members of the 18th Assembly made repeated calls for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs to develop a strategy to address the municipal funding gap. That report was quietly tabled on the final day of the final sitting of the 18th Assembly, which prevented any public discussion. This is not surprising, Mr. Speaker, given how dire the findings are. On page 12, it states, "In 2019, the full cost of basic infrastructure has increased to \$2.9 billion with an investment of \$69 million needed annually." It went on to say that, "The total annual funding deficit for community governments is approximately \$24.5 million."

The funding MACA provides accounts for up to 90 percent of community government revenues. The extreme funding shortfall leaves community governments to choose between allowing assets to age into disrepair or pass the cost to residents. If the City of Yellowknife chose to address their \$11.5-million funding gap by raising taxation revenues, the property taxes of every land owner would skyrocket, making the capital an unaffordable place for all but the wealthiest to live.

Mr. Speaker, the government's mandate commits to closing the community funding gap by \$5 million over the life of this government. At that rate, we

may never close the funding gap; that barely keeps up with inflation. The funding proposed in the mandate is equal to a little over \$37,000 per year per community. This means communities will continue to be underfunded by this government to the tune of \$20 million a year for the next four years.

Closing the funding gap would satisfy not one, but two of the priorities of our government. According to the Conference Board of Canada, closing the funding gap would create an additional 220 additional jobs per year in infrastructure construction, environmental services, municipal government services, and infrastructure repair. Direct and indirect multipliers of employment through millions of dollars of investments at the municipal level equate to 13 jobs, whereas \$1 million of investments at the territorial government level equates to seven. By accomplishing one priority, we actually satisfy two: if we close the funding gap, we create jobs in small communities.

In MACA's report, the Minister states, "I want to acknowledge that we are unable to definitely answer when and how the funding gap will be closed." It took the department four years of study to reach this conclusion. This is not acceptable, and it is not sustainable. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ARNICA INN TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROJECT

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past week I witnessed and participated in a decision-making process where there appeared to be a misunderstanding with respect to a matter that would provide housing to approximately 42 people in Yellowknife; a misunderstanding that blew up in the press, and one that could have easily been avoided if this government gave serious thought to the benefit of the project, a project with many moving parts.

I give credit to the Yellowknife Women's Society, who identified a serious need in the community and have identified a potential solution to address and action this need. The solution, however, does require buy-in from Canada, this government, and all stakeholders, and this is where it gets cumbersome.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that there are multiple parties involved in the Arnica project. There is the owner of the building, the Yellowknife Women's Society, various GNWT departments, the

Government of Canada, the City of Yellowknife, concerned residents, and the future tenants.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government would ultimately provide funding of approximately \$4 million, which each territory could use. The NWT Housing Corporation would contribute approximately \$650,000 to confirm its support of the project, to help it move forward. The federal government will want to know if the project is feasible. The GNWT will want to know if they are making a one-time contribution or if they will have to make further contributions or ultimately have to take the building over at some point.

However, it does not end there. There is the matter of the land and building. Is it suitable? What condition is it in? Is there contamination, and are there zoning issues? In addition to that, there are consulting fees, legal fees, purchase costs, ongoing maintenance costs, management costs, and tight deadlines. All this has to be addressed in what is now a condensed timeline.

Mr. Speaker, one area that will ultimately bog down the process is the red tape that both the federal and territorial governments have in place. It is in this area that non-profits require assistance, as they often lack the resources and time to navigate through it. It is assistance in this area that this government has to be proactive on and hands-on. In this day and age, we find it easy to send emails back and forth and try to address issues. Nothing, however, replaces initial face-to-face meeting with all parties present to clarify issues and come to a consensus on how to proceed and define responsibilities to meet deadlines and deliver projects. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues. I want to end this on a positive note and say that I am pleased with the Minister of NWT Housing Corporation's commitment to meet with all parties at one table in order to expedite this project. I will look to her to offer the same courtesy and resources to the Hay River Family Support Centre for their shelter project as well as those communities looking at similar projects. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to welcome and recognize Colette

Langlois, the Ombud for the NWT, and I think she is a constituent of mine in Hay River South. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

HON. DIAN THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I would like to recognize Denise MacDonald, who is a constituent of mine in Inuvik Boot Lake. Welcome, Denise. Thank you.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this moment to recognize two of the Pages with us today who are constituents of mine in Great Slave. I apologize for names, Gianne Mercado and Willem Jacobs. I thank them for their commitment and time to this work. I would also like to recognize my constituent James Tally in the gallery. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize Mr. Kieron Testart, who is a constituent of Range Lake riding, and was also a one-time MLA in the 18th Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. If we have missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to the Chamber, and I hope you are enjoying our proceedings. It is always nice to have an audience with us. Thank you. Item 6, replies to the budget address (Day 3 of 7). Item 7, acknowledgements. Item 8, oral questions. Member for Nunakput.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 101-19(2): AGING IN PLACE IN NUNAKPUT

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the mandate we are approving here, enabling our seniors to live at home with dignity. The three Ministers that are given responsibilities, the Minister of ECE, the Housing Corporation, Health and Social Services: are their responsibilities separate as Ministers, or are they going to be working together? Question is for the Premier. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely. This government is actually working closer than, what I understand, from any

other government before. All three Ministers will be working on this project. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JACOBSON: Since they are working so fast and working together, could we move up the timeline in regards to getting into our communities, in collaboration, in a coordinated visit to move up for the Elders in our community?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: My Ministers are willing to visit constituents as people invite them. Unfortunately, though, I can't make a commitment on what time, because they all have schedules that they will have to coordinate. Invite us and we will come.

MR. JACOBSON: April 4th.

---Laughter

This government is openly considering a pilot project in Nunakput to make the improvements to help my seniors age in place. If so, I would be happy to work with the appropriate Minister on the proposal as it goes forward. I think that is the Minister of Health.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Again, all Ministers are more than willing to work with our Members across the hall. Please contact our Minister, and I am sure that they will make arrangements to work with you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 102-19(2):
ARNICA INN TRANSITIONAL HOUSING
PROJECT

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Arnica project is a good project in that it brings in federal dollars. The other thing it does is: it will create employment and also provide some opportunities for contractors. Most importantly, it provides 42 extra beds for people who need housing. Mr. Speaker, I have asked the Minister of housing if she will commit her department to develop a policy setting a process that would ensure future proponents accessing federal housing programs are provided timely assistance with completing such applications. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With this new federal funding that is rolling out with the \$60 million co-investment fund, it is a new set of money, and it does come with a unique approach.

We are willing to work with people within the Northwest Territories to complete their applications and to assist them the best that we can.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: In Hay River, the family support centre is trying to, over the past the couple of years, they have been trying to get a housing project off the ground, and again, non-profit limited resources and running into a bit of a problem. I know the Housing Corporation has been assisting, but will the Minister of housing structure the department to assist the Hay River Family Support Centre with their co-investment application, as well?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Yes. The Housing Corporation, we are there to help and assist with the application process. It is quite lengthy. I just want to explain to the Member, as well, that this is a federal program. It is offered through CMHC, and we don't even see the applications. It would be two different approaches, that the family support centre in Hay River would be working solely with CMHC and their representative, and the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, we are here as a support system for people of the Northwest Territories to access this program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 103-19(2):
VICTIM SERVICES PROGRAM ISSUES AND
REVIEW

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Justice, who is responsible for Victim Services for this government. Can the Minister tell us about the comprehensive review of Victim Services, who carried out this work, and when it will be available to MLAs and the public? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The evaluation is currently underway. It is not complete yet. Right now, I am anticipating it will be received by the end of April to myself, and I will then endeavour to have it to the Members of this House as quickly as possible thereafter. Thank you.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. I do not think I heard who is actually doing the study, but maybe she can throw that in with the next response. The exact duties and job descriptions of the Victim Services coordinators, they are not very clear. These are delivered through third parties in various communities. It is my understanding that some of these individuals

perform many functions above and beyond the call of duty, including cleaning up crime scenes. Can the Minister explain exactly what type of supports are available for these coordinators and whether there has ever been a review of the effectiveness of these supports?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I apologize to the Member. I had missed that part. The review is being done by FWCO Management Consultants. Now, with respect, Mr. Speaker, to the work being done by Victim Services providers in the communities, I have had the opportunity of working directly, prior to being in this role, with some of the individuals who provide Victim Services. They do tremendous work. They do often go above and beyond.

As for cleaning up crime scenes, that is the very first time I have ever heard that, and I would certainly hope I can speak to the Member further if that is, in fact, the case. That said, with respect to generally their duties and the supports, I am assured that the current review that is underway will consider whether or not our Victim Services workers are being given adequate supports and what more might need to be done, if anything, to better support them.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. I can assure her that is what I heard first-hand, directly from a constituent who had to serve in that capacity before. The community-based approach to Victim Services makes a lot of sense, of course. It has been in place since 1996, but clearly, the network of supports and coordinators has never been completed. As I understand it, there are 11 coordinators in eight communities. Can the Minister tell us if there are plans to expand these services to all of our communities, and when will that happen?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: At this point, between now and April, we will be waiting on the review to determine whether or not there needs to be an expansion. In the meantime, Victim Services workers do provide assistance by phone, though certainly I have no illusions; that is not the same as being in person. Again, Mr. Speaker, I will be waiting on that review to determine whether or not some further action needs to be taken to expand or how else we might better support victims of crime across the territories.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. Can the Minister tell us, though, whether there are any specific plans now to improve Victim Services here in the Northwest Territories, and what will those

improvements look like, hint, hint, budget 2020-2021? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I am alive to the fact that, in fact, there has been some increase to the budget of the Victim Services provision here in the Northwest Territories. In the most recently tabled main estimates, there has been an increase of \$240,000 to Victim Services. That is the first increase to victim-services based funding in many, many years and will help better support the provision of those services. One other note is that we are also improving the supports that we give to our Victim Services workers, that there is a small pool of funding provided through federal funding. That helps provide enhanced health supports. Because these are partners in the communities, they are not necessarily given the opportunity or do not necessarily within their employment have enhanced or expanded health benefits. There is some funding available for these workers should they need additional, whether it is psychological supports, counselling, or otherwise. That is coordinated through the Department of Justice. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 104-19(2):
CLOSING THE MUNICIPAL FUNDING GAP

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. My first question is: two weeks ago my colleague from Nunakput asked the Minister to read the report "Focus for the Future" tabled by MACA on the last day of the last Assembly; has the Minister read the report? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My apologies to the Member. I have not read the report.

MS. CLEVELAND: No. I appreciate the Minister's honesty on that one, and maybe we can do dinner and reading together. My next question is: what is the department planning to do moving forward to ensure that the figures reported on page 12 continue to be annually updated and provided to the NWT Association of Communities? Thank you.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: We are meeting this weekend with the association of communities, and I will be meeting with the executive director to get a full briefing and to follow up and look for solutions and, going forward, to work with our municipal gap.

MS. CLEVELAND: I am not sure if I understood if the figures would be updated on an annual basis. My next question is: what percentage of the annual \$25-million funding gap does MACA anticipate will be covered by federal funding? The second part of that question is: how sustainable do we feel that relying on federal funding to cover the municipal funding gap is?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: I don't have those answers right now. I will follow up with the Member, but I would like to also express that we are looking at initiatives at the community level and specifically looking at a land transfer for municipalities and working with them to try to work with the municipal gap that we currently have right now. Going forward with our priorities, we have set aside \$5 million to work with that. Strategically, I will be working closely with my department, and I will have answers. I will follow up with the Member.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, I am definitely game to sit down with the Minister any time. One thing that I routinely have heard lately from my constituents is that the government seemed to very easily find the extra million dollars to cover the taxation error for the Stanton Territorial Hospital. It was a very expensive oversight that could have almost doubled the amount of funding that the mandate proposes to include to close the municipal funding gap over the next four years. I am wondering if the Minister will at least commit to including the rate of inflation in the \$5-million mandate commitment for closing the funding gap? Thank you.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Unfortunately, I will have to follow up with the Member. Looking at the \$1.5 million that we had paid out for a grant in lieu of property taxes, that came across as a surprise as the Stanton Hospital was constructed, but we did not forecast and we did not budget for that increase in property taxes. However, I will follow up with the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 105-19(2):
MEDICAL TRAVEL CLAIM FORMS

MR. NORN: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. The medical travel expense claim form in its current format is not user-friendly, and it has been reported to me that they are hard to understand and to fill out, causing unnecessary delays. I have it here in front of me, and I am looking at it. I walked through with one of my constituents. It was a very difficult

process. I think it would have been far easier to go take their claims and go to H&R Block and go fill it out, but I don't think we want to do that with our constituents to do these forms. I think we should make it more user-friendly and easier to go through and streamlined. My question to the Minister is: can the Minister commit to having this form reviewed and redesigned? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Member for asking this question. Medical travel in the Northwest Territories, it is a big program. The medical travel office has not previously heard concerns about the expense claimed from clients, however, the form serves two purposes: number one, the medical travel office needs certain information about the expenses being claimed to ensure expenses align with travel to an approved appointment in order to authorize payment. That is number one. Number two is: the Department of Finance also needs that form as part of the backup payment under the government's accounting system. I am open to meeting with the Member to hear any suggestions he may have to simplify the form. However, the information on the form needs to be collected in enough detail to be financially accountable to standards and to satisfy also the requirements of the non-insured health benefits program, as well, as well as third parties. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NORN: Thank you for the response from the Minister. Again, not quite what I wanted to hear, but at least I am glad she is open to some dialogue to listen to my suggestions. I do have some suggestions, but that will be for another time. You did mention a new accounting software. I believe that she is referring to SAM that a lot of departments are moving on towards. I know that a lot of my constituents are complaining about some of the delays that are happening with this new software. With this new transition, how long can the current claimants expect to wait for their claims to be reimbursed?

HON. DIANE THOM: The Member is correct. On January 27, 2020, the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority had transitioned to the GNWT service accountability and management, which is called SAM. This brought six of our different financial systems carried over from the previous regional health authorities to align to a coordinated system. Prior to this change, payments were processed from within the health authority, and now, the GNWT's financial and employment shared systems, FESS, centres with the Department of Finance process payments. The centres provide Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authorities with a convenient one-

stop shop for processing all its financial transactions. This is the same system used by other departments within the GNWT. This change is meant to provide more consistency in the payment processing and better financial information across the Health and Social Services centre.

As with any system implementation, the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority and the Department of Finance are currently going through a period of change as with this move, there are 1,500 employees that have transitioned into this new system. New process, new systems take time to refine, and staff to require time to adjust this new way of working. During this adjustment period, we expect there are going to be delays, but our staff is working hard to ensure that the target time for processing meets within the 30 days.

MR. NORN: Thank you, Minister, for that very detailed answer. On the form here, it says, four to six weeks. I guess I didn't really quite get an answer. In addition to this four to six weeks that it states on the form, is there an additional delay for claimants?

HON. DIANE THOM: Sorry. Is the Member asking if the process is within the six week period? Can I just ask for clarification, please?

MR. NORN: My apologies. I will just repeat myself here again. The form here says, four to six weeks in its current state. With the new implementation of SAM, is this going to be in addition to the four to six weeks on top of this that claimants will have to wait? Another 30 days?

HON. DIANE THOM: As I slowly glance over to the Minister of Finance to just seek clarification as the processing now comes through the Department of Finance, I don't believe that is correct. From the time that the claims get into our system, it is within that 30 days. If that is not correct, I can clarify with the Member.

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

MR. NORN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is: this form was quite difficult to get, and it wasn't readily accessible. Will the Minister commit to having this form in electronic form, easier access for the public because I didn't see it, and that is for potential claimants and also have a quick tutorial just to make sure, probably a start to our dialogue to make it a little easier, so have a quick tutorial to how to use this form? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE THOM: I would like to thank the Member again for this suggestion. The form is usually provided prior to travel as it is required to be signed by the clinician as confirmation proof of attendance to their appointment. The form is

available at any medical travel office or at all health centres throughout the Northwest Territories. However, based on the feedback, I will advise the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority to post the medical travel expense claim to their website to ensure that there is one available online. In addition, if clients have difficulty completing their expense form, I would encourage them to reach out to the health centre or to the regional medical travel office for support. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 106-19(2):
HEALTHCARE SERVICES IN DEH CHO
COMMUNITIES

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My questions are directed towards the Health Minister. I am not certain that the health Minister is aware of ongoing problems with healthcare in the small communities. However, does the health Minister have any aspirations to fixing the healthcare system? Mahsi.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the Member brings up a concern about the health, in general, across the Northwest Territories. I do want to talk about a program we are doing. It is a primary healthcare reform, so it is an initiative that is advancing culturally, safety, and relationship-based care as priorities of the Health and Social Services system where clients have better access to services closer and in their communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Does the department conduct annual evaluations of healthcare services provided by each health centre?

HON. DIANE THOM: I am not aware of whether we provide evaluations on each of our health centres, but I can look into it and get back to the Member.

MR. BONNETROUGE: My final question to the Minister: does the department conduct investigations into complaints made against health centre staff in terms of the treatment received by patients?

HON. DIANE THOM: Absolutely, we do. I can get back to the Member on the process of being able to have this looked into.

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

QUESTION 107-19(2):
YELLOWKNIFE MOTOR VEHICLES OFFICE
HOURS

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement earlier, I said that I hope by the end of four years I can go renew my driver's licence on an evening or weekend in Yellowknife. My first question to the Minister of Infrastructure is: what are the current barriers to extending the hours of the DMV? I know that nothing is simple around here, but can she just identify some of the barriers?

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Member's acknowledgement about the difficulty of sometimes changing a process that has been going on a while. They have tried in the past to change some hours or to privatize the office here, and it didn't work well.

Some of the issues in which they were saying was the problem was that the timing and having people working late was leading to situations of harassment and even stalking. If that was to occur, there needs to be a response team available to the office that is located there. That would then mean extending security hours and others. It would also mean to extend the hours of people who could do the special approvals or overrides and authorizations. It is not just those three people sitting at the front or one person sitting at the front; there is other staffing that would have to be amended.

There were things around even just the building maintenance that would then have to change in order to have the extension of the hours. A big one was also in dealing with the union collective agreement, which I am not the Minister for, so I won't speak to. However, there would need to be negotiations and changes to that contract in order to extend the hours. Currently, we only have two funded issuing positions and one supervisor position. Any of these issues would not allow a six-day-a-week issuing without hiring additional staff, and as we have all heard many, many times in the last little while, we have no money. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JOHNSON: That was quite the list of challenges to simply being open for evenings and weekends. I do believe there is a solution here, and I do believe that I can work with the Minister to find one, even if we were to close Mondays and open Saturdays. That would be the exact same amount of working hours. Perhaps that is one of the solutions.

I am going to spend the next four years trying to work through each of these issues. I would like to begin with the collective agreement. The Minister is correct that collective bargaining is the department of the board of management, of which she is a member, and it is chaired by the Minister of Finance. Ultimately, each department brings towards to form the GNWT's bargaining mandate, which then meets with the respective union.

My question for the Minister of Infrastructure: is she willing to write to the Minister of Finance that the Department of Infrastructure, in the future, would like the flexibility to extend those hours at the department of motor vehicles?

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: It is my understanding that it is not my place to be lobbying my colleague, the Minister, in that manner, so my answer to you would be no.

MR. JOHNSON: That is completely the role of a Minister in their department. There are a number of schedules in our collective agreement, specific cases for corrections and nurses. Yesterday, we had a conversation about homecare workers and allowing them to work more flexible hours so that they can serve elders outside the hours of 9:00 to 5:00.

The Minister of Finance does not know the on-the-ground operations of every department. I am not asking that the Minister of Infrastructure commit that she can do this. We can't commit anything to change in the collective bargaining agreement. That is why it is bargaining. I am asking the Minister of Infrastructure to write on behalf of her department to the Minister of Finance asking for the opportunity for more flexible hours at the department of motor vehicles to be pursued during bargaining.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: The Member is correct in that there is a lot of conversation that will go on within the Cabinet and which I would very much be okay with having a discussion with my colleague about your email. I have to say I was actually quite intrigued when I received your questions and did look at this as maybe an opportunity of something we could change. However, as I learned the processes of the GNWT, I understand that there is a process that has to be followed. Yes, I want to streamline and change processes so that they are more efficient. However, at this point, with the knowledge I have, I do not want to say that I would put a formal writing request in to my colleague.

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

QUESTION 108-19(2):
ALCOHOL STRATEGY

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. In my statement today, I spoke about the work that the Canadian Alcohol Policy Evaluation project, or CAPE, has done to look at ways to reduce alcohol harm. CAPE identified a group of best practices, and I wonder for the Minister could tell us what role, if any, the GNWT had in developing this work. Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member. I was able to print out the CAPE report. Unfortunately, the Northwest Territories scored very low. We only have 33 percent. As part of the report, it came under 11 policy domains. I want to speak a little bit about the report, because it is very disturbing, and it is something that our department needs to improve on. I do want to talk about some of the things that we are doing.

In 2016, the GNWT created an opioid task force, and recently, under the mandate, the task force group has been expanded to include alcohol and drugs. That is one part of it. Last month, the group renamed as the territorial committee on problematic substances. Its mandate is to develop a comprehensive response to the ongoing issues related to substance abuse in the Northwest Territories.

One of the deliverables for the Northwest Territories will be in the form of a whole-of-government alcohol strategy. It has already been identified in the CAPE, as it is an evidence-based review, as having a specific territorial strategy to discuss alcohol-related harms in a coordinated approach that will have a measurable impact.

The whole-of-government approach is 11 policy domains, as I mentioned, as part of the CAPE report, and many of them fall just outside of the Health and Social Services, hence the importance of having a territorial approach.

The plan is for the committee to report to the chair of the deputy minister's committee on child and family. As this is an inaugural meeting, it was identified to the committee that the development of an alcohol strategy would require community input through active engagement and determine the scope of work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: I appreciate the Minister was able to share some good information there. I just wondered, in particular, to repeat my first question, what role the GNWT played in the development of the CAPE report.

HON. DIANE THOM: Yesterday, I mentioned that there was a research RFP out. This is a preliminary research and discussion paper towards the development of an NWT alcohol strategy and was recently tendered. The results of this discussion paper will be presented in the full-day workshop that is held next month, March 12th, at the Chief Drygeese Centre. The purpose of that workshop is to set the direction for a whole-of-government approach towards the development of an NWT strategy. This will be led by our Department of Health and Social Services.

The next step during that process is to be able to talk about the CAPE report, as there were recommendations under the 11 domains.

MS. GREEN: I am going to give up on that question, and I am going to go on now to the failing grade the Minister has referenced, that we got a failing grade, as most jurisdictions did. What are the barriers that government is facing right now to developing better alcohol policies, as outlined in the CAPE report?

HON. DIANE THOM: There are a lot of barriers as a result of this report. I mean, it basically told us we are failing under the Canadian Alcohol Policy Evaluation. Our department is working with and receiving funding from Indigenous Services Canada so that we can support this problematic substance abuse, and we are looking at hiring a special advisor for this substance abuse. We will continue to be tasked with looking and coordinating the alcohol strategy in the Northwest Territories.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At times in the past, when a new alcohol policy has been discussed that would change pricing, change accessibility, and so on, there has been pushback from the public. My question for the Minister is: how is she going to create public support for better alcohol policies? Thank you.

HON. DIANE THOM: As I mentioned, we are doing the research now. We will be coming together and hiring a position to be able to oversee this project. It is right, you know; we talk within this government that it is not just a government approach. We need to reach out and involve our Indigenous partners and other stakeholders in the Northwest Territories to be able to have positive results as we work through the alcohol strategy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 109-19(2):
FRANK CHANNEL BRIDGE

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] There is a major bridge on our lands. It is called Frank Channel Bridge. Without that bridge, we know that we won't be able to transport a lot of things, and it is really old. I have questions for Infrastructure. [End of translation]

[Microphone not on] ...part of the North Slave highway lifeline to the rest of the territory, and also to the south. It is 50-plus years old and badly aging. A question to the Minister of Infrastructure: where does a new Frank Channel Bridge rank in the capital plan of the Minister's infrastructure department? Mahsi.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure of any ranking structure within our capital plan, but I could definitely look to see if there is one. The department fully acknowledges that the Frank Channel Bridge does need to be replaced. In fact, we have been applying for funding, federal funding, to replace the bridge, and instead have actually been turned down the last times that we have tried. We have not been successful; however, we do feel that the next application has a good shot of being approved by the Canadian government, so that is our next step.

We have had early engagement with industry about the planned rehabilitation, and industry representatives at the time told us that they did want the replacement of the bridge and the elimination of the overhead structure. That would allow for the strangely shaped and oversized loads to get on the bridge. We are currently engaging with the community of Behchoko and the Tlicho Government on the replacement of the bridge, the pre-engineering and environmental baseline work to prepare for its replacement. We will have a request for proposals out for the bridge design this year, and the department is continuing to do internal work to advance the project and secure the funding for the construction of the bridge. Thank you.

MR. LAFFERTY: I understand a proposal was submitted in the 18th Assembly to replace the Frank Channel Bridge, but unfortunately, it failed to secure funding. I understand there is a federal counterpart to this. Is there a new plan to seek federal assistance on the Frank Channel Bridge? What kind of schedule are we looking at?

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: I am just looking through my notes here to see when the next application will go in for the federal funding. My

understanding is it will happen after the federal budget is passed in the House, so the intent is to move this project forward as quickly as possible. There have definitely been issues with the bridge, we do understand. However, I should point out that the bridge is safe. It is currently inspected by engineers. There was an interim measure to preserve the bridge until the project funding could be secured, and concrete deck repairs were carried out in September of 2018 and June of 2019.

MR. LAFFERTY: This is a very important project, and my understanding is that a proposal has not really been submitted yet, unfortunately. I want to ask the Minister: what discussion has this Minister of Infrastructure had with her federal counterparts regarding the funding for this very important project, the Frank Channel Bridge?

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: As I am currently new to this role, I have not yet had a chance to address my federal counterparts on this specific project. I believe the Government of the Northwest Territories is doing a good job, and we are trying very much to get in front of the federal government to impress upon them our infrastructure deficit. When you asked me about ranking, I believe all of the deficits we have in our infrastructure are all critical pieces that need to be funded and we need to get them going, so there is a process. We plan to resubmit the plan as soon as we can. We have been applying actively for funding for this project. This is a critical piece of infrastructure that allows our mining industry to go forward, our resupply of goods and services and things to Yellowknife and to communities beyond, so this piece of infrastructure is very, very important and high on the department's radar.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. I would like to see more action-oriented, instead of talking about this particular project. Our MP also asked me where the proposal was and has it been submitted. At that point in time, that was a few months ago, I said, "I imagine it has been, with a new government." Unfortunately, it is not there at this point. I am afraid we are going to miss the opportunity again, because we still had the funding criteria last time. This is through the National Trade Corridors Fund, I believe, and I would highly encourage the Minister to get hold of our MP and also their federal counterpart. When could that happen? I would assume, I hope, it will be immediately after we have our session here, Mr. Speaker. Masi.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: As mentioned, there is a process that needs to be followed. The federal government also just recently had an election. Therefore, we were waiting for that to happen as

well as their budgets to go through, and then we would be making the application again. As stated, we have consistently been trying to get this funding, so this is not falling off my department's radar. In fact, it is one of the things that we are moving forward on. I have met with MP McLeod, and we have started to have discussions about the infrastructure deficit that the Northwest Territories is facing. I sat down and had a specific meeting with the MP on this issue; not at the moment, however. That has been more of a schedule issue, and we have been talking about getting our offices together to have the more infrastructure-focused conversation rather than the larger conversation we have been having with the MP as a Cabinet. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 110-19(2):
ADDRESSING DRUG USE IN NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES COMMUNITIES

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services in regard to my statement. Knowing that we have a lot of hard drugs that have been reported, will the Minister of Health and Social Services ensure that we are not working in silos in our community and make sure that her department, the mental health and addiction counsellors, public health, are working in partnership with education, RCMP, Victim Services, and Indigenous governments to provide education on drugs, especially the drugs that are circulating in our communities, to all our youth in our communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely. This is something that our department will continue doing, but not only that, if you look at the mandate, Mr. Speaker, a lot of the different priorities talk about working in partnership. It is important that we continue to work within all of the different departments rather than working in silos. I think that is important. All key stakeholders in the communities, we need to work together and continue to do better for the youth and all of the residents of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. SEMMLER: Would the Minister agree that power is knowledge, and by empowering our youth with education on drugs and alcohol more than once a year in their school class, that this should be provided?

HON. DIANE THOM: Yes. The Health and Social Services staff works closely with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, and we support opportunities to work with youth on drugs and alcohol education. One example I want to bring up is we sponsored The Dope Experience, which is a multimedia workshop that engages youth in art and discussion on substance abuse. Staff are also partnering with the Northwest Territories Association of Communities and Western Arctic Moving Pictures to deliver these workshops.

MS. SEMMLER: I thank the Minister for that. I want the Minister to commit to work with the other Ministers, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Education, to ensure that they are all working together to make sure that this happens more frequently, given the amount of hard drugs. I understand that The Dope Experience is for marijuana, and that is because of the legalization. We wanted to educate our youth on how marijuana affects us, but what I want is these hard drugs. In the community, I am hearing from young kids, under 19, who are starting into these hard drugs, crack cocaine and things like this. We need to be doing this education before. We need prevention before we go to reaction.

HON. DIANE THOM: I hear the Member's concern. We both live in the same community, and it is a big issue for us, but not only just us, for a lot of communities in the Northwest Territories. I am going to commit to that. That, for me, is a third yes today.

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

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the Minister may not have this detailed information on hand, but can the Minister advise me if there is a wait time for treatment should someone choose to go for drug addiction, and where can our youths, under 19 or under 18, if they find themselves with this type of addiction, where can we get help for them? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE THOM: The wait times vary per facility. They usually average between one to six weeks for the wait time, but there have also been situations where we have had to have patients wait for up to two months. That is the one answer I know, and I can get back to the Member on what the process is. I just want to make sure that I give the Member the right answer, so I will get back to the Member with the process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Item 9, written questions. Item 10, returns to written questions. Mr. Clerk.

Returns to Written Questions

RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 1-19(3): GNWT PARTICIPATION IN THE ASSOCIATION FOR MINERAL EXPLORATION ROUNDUP IN JANUARY 2020

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question 1-19(2), asked by the Member for Frame Lake on February 5, 2020, related to the Government of the Northwest Territories' participation in the Association for Mineral Exploration Roundup from January 18 to 23, 2020, in Vancouver.

This year's Roundup presented a timely opportunity for the GNWT to confirm and action the 19 Legislative Assembly's stated priority to increase resource exploration and development.

Cabinet Members, Indigenous governments, and government officials represented and promoted the Northwest Territories and used this opportunity to highlight that the GNWT recognizes the critical economic importance of realizing new mining projects.

The NWT delegation to this year's Roundup was led by myself in my role as Premier and Ministers Nogleby and Thompson. Senior officials, geoscientists with the Northwest Territories Geological Survey, marketing professionals, and support staff rounded out the delegation of 22 GNWT representatives. The total cost of air travel, accommodations, meals, incidentals, and transportation for the GNWT delegation was \$70,753. No allowances were paid. All travel was economy class except in two flight segments where business class flight prices were lower by \$130 and \$277 respectively than available economy class seats.

Additionally, the GNWT supported the participation of 16 NWT regional Indigenous government representatives at a cost of \$99,611 that includes \$65,000 in air travel, accommodations, meals, incidentals, and transportation. Ensuring that Indigenous governments are represented at Roundup supports the NWT Mineral Development Strategy goal of enhancing Indigenous engagement and capacity and provides Indigenous governments with an opportunity to demonstrate their support for responsible resource development alongside the GNWT.

Roundup offered an opportunity to showcase to industry that support exists in the NWT for mineral exploration and mining, particularly within Indigenous governments and jurisdictions.

It also provided an opportunity to highlight that key infrastructure and mining projects are advancing and succeeding in our jurisdiction.

The NWT's trade show presence is an important component of GNWT participation at this event. Three booths showcasing the NWT's geology and geoscience, exploration and investment potential, and public infrastructure initiatives, along with four adjacent booths showcasing Indigenous governments and organizations, were part of the NWT trade show presence. The strategic location and positioning of these booths created a 'gathering place' which acted as a venue for networking opportunities, meetings and media events.

GNWT exhibition costs and affiliated registration fees totaled approximately \$37,157. No consultant fees were paid. Registration costs totaling \$1,124 were also paid for affiliated professional development opportunities that staff attended at the conference.

The GNWT supported and took part in a number of media and networking events to increase industry awareness of the NWT's investment environment and to promote the potential of NWT mineral resources. These included:

- The annual NWT Night reception at which the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment and Indigenous leaders had an opportunity to address and network with 334 registered attendees, including industry representatives and other stakeholders.
- The launch of regional mineral development strategies completed by the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and the Gwich'in Tribal Council.
- The signing of a commercial agreement for Det'on Cho Corporation to become the contracted miner for the Cheetah Resources Ltd. Nechalacho rare earth elements project.
- An Indigenous business panel discussion focused on capacity building and participation in the exploration and mining sectors.
- A coffee gathering with NWT leaders.
- A lunch for NWT students enrolled in post-secondary education programs in the British Columbia lower mainland area.
- The launch of the Invest Canada North Campaign (a partnered three-year marketing and promotion initiative in collaboration with Canada, Yukon, Nunavut, and companies investing in the North).

The costs associated with hosting or supporting these events totaled \$52,842.

The total GNWT cost, including supporting Indigenous participation at Roundup, was \$261,488. This is a decrease compared to the previous years' expenditures of approximately \$286,389 in 2019, and \$277,530 in 2018.

Roundup is regarded as Canada's premier gathering event for individuals, companies, and jurisdictions interested in advancing exploration and mineral development projects. It is well attended by the mining sector's junior exploration companies and their financiers and is heavily leveraged by competing mining jurisdictions.

Roundup continues to be a core event for the GNWT to convene valuable face-to-face meetings with key industry representatives, Indigenous governments, and leaders and officials from other jurisdictions. The event helps to advance a key pillar of the mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Returns to written questions. Item 11, replies to the Commissioner's address. Item 12, petitions. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, reports of standing and special committees. Item 15, tabling of documents. Minister of Finance.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 43-19(2):
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES), NO. 1,
2020-2021

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document, "Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 44-19(2):
REDUCING ALCOHOL-RELATED HARMS AND
COSTS IN NORTHWEST TERRITORIES: A
POLICY REVIEW

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the following report card, "Reducing Alcohol-Related Harms and Costs in Northwest Territories: A Policy Review." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Tabling of documents. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

TABLED DOCUMENT 45-19(2):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HEALTH AND
SOCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY MEDICAL
TRAVEL EXPENSE CLAIM FORM

MR. NORN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought I was going to do this tomorrow, but I will do this now. I would like to table the medical travel expense claim form for the record. Mahsi cho.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Tabling of documents. Item 16, notices of motion. Item 17, motions. Item 18, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 19, first reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 2:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 4, 2019-
2020

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Sahtu, that Bill 2, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2019-2020, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. The motion is on the floor and is non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 2 has had first reading. Item 20, second reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 2:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 4, 2019-
2020

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Sahtu, that Bill 2, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2019-2020, be read for the second time. This bill makes supplementary appropriations for operations expenditures of the Government of the Northwest Territories for the 2019-2020 fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. To the principle of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Bill 2 has had second reading. Item 21, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Tabled Document 12-19(2), 2019-2023 Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories; Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates 2020-2021; and Tabled Document 43-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021.

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

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I will call the committee to order. We will take a short recess. What is the wish of the committee? Sorry. Mr. Norn.

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

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Okay. We will take a short recess.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All right, I will now call Committee back to order. Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 12-19(2), 2019-2023 Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories. Now we will return to page 30. Does Madam Premier wish to bring any witnesses into the House?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to bring in a witness.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witness to the Chamber. Would the Premier please introduce her witness?

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

for the Executive and Indigenous Affairs. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier. Just to go back to what we decided to go through the mandate, Members, you will have 10 minutes per priority. We are going back to "Increase food security through locally produced, harvested, and affordable food." Questions. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I had someone approach me, actually, last night who has 48 chickens here in Yellowknife. They would like to give away some of the eggs or maybe even sell some of the eggs locally, but there seem to be some issues around that. How are the items here going to help that individual be able to sell eggs locally? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. This might be a little bit more difficult. I kind of feel sorry for the neighbours, 25 chickens next door. We are going to be amending our own regulatory framework so that we can remove barriers to developing food production businesses. Lands will be reviewing its policy and regulations in that regard. However, this might also be a municipal issue, Madam Chair. Therefore, we would need to work with the municipal government. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes, I don't think there is a municipal issue here, at least in this particular instance. Maybe I could just get a little bit more detail about what some of the barriers are right now with the current regulatory framework when it comes to local food production. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. If we can direct the question to the Minister of ENR.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Sorry. Thank you, Madam Chair. When we are looking at barriers, it is about trying to work with the communities to see what they want to do, what they want to harvest, and then again it is making sure that we are doing things within the right act, the framework and

policies, moving forward. Again, it is about also training some of the staff. It is a mentoring process to it. Again, so these are some of the challenges from ENR's aspect of it. It is about how we work with the governments.

On my other half, it is about the ability to deal with the land. Again, it comes down to our regulations and how we can fix some of these things about agriculture and how do we use that land and how we can work with them to get it. Right now, we have really high rates, but that is from the previous process that we had done, so that is part of the regulation. We are trying to work on those things. Those are a couple of the challenges that we see moving forward.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I think I will start over again. This is a guy who has already got chickens. He has got them here in Yellowknife. There seem to be some issues around food handling, maybe education, inspection stuff. This is not an ENR issue. As I understand, it is probably an environmental health issue, which is health and social services. What are the current barriers, and what are we going to do to improve food handling, inspection services, and so on to allow for local food production and retail? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I apologize for that. There are quite a few departments. You are absolutely right; the department of health will be having to look at some of their regulatory frameworks, as well. For example, people who might want to provide produce or canned preserves in the community market, we would need to do some kitchen because, right now, there is a requirement for an industrial kitchen. Those are things we need to look at: if you are small production, do you need to have that? The other one I know from running the homeless shelter was being able to utilize, I hate to use the term "road kill," is kind of what I know it as, and so that was always an issue, and so meat spoiling because we could not use that meat when, in my case, women were hungry. Those are some of the issues that we need to address as we move forward. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. That is, I think, more of what I was looking for, and that is probably what this individual is also looking for. I want to go to work on Nutrition North. I do not have

any difficulty with what is proposed here, but I think the other thing that is missing, that I do not see here, is that we need to work with Nunavut and Yukon to put pressure on the federal government to design a much better Nutrition North program that does not reward retailers, that actually rewards perhaps producers, local producers, and consumers of food, not retailers. Is that something that this government is going to be doing, as well? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Absolutely. The three territories have over the years, many years is my understanding, developed strong partnerships when we go to speak to the federal government. We will continue to do so, and I will make a commitment to bring this issue forward to the other two Premiers. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. While I am on a roll, another general observation I would like to offer with this particular mandate item is: there are a few deliverables here, but I had hoped to see some actual targets. Are we going to increase local food production by 25 percent by the end of four years or whatever the target is? I am just wondering: do we actually track local food production and consumption in a way where it is measurable, where we could set targets? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this point, we cannot put targets such as "improve food production by 25 percent" because we haven't done a base analysis of what actually we are producing. You cannot increase things when you do not know where you stand at the moment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes, okay. Then that is clearly something we need to do, and it needs to be in here. Unfortunately, we cannot change this right now, but I would really encourage, then, that we develop a system of measuring local food production because, if we don't have a way of measuring it, how can we know whether any of these things in here are actually going to improve and increase local food production. Can I get a commitment out of the Premier that we will develop

a system of measuring local food production and consumption? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. In my opening comments on the mandate, there was a paragraph that says we also recognize that, to better report and meaningfully measure progress, in many cases, we need to establish indicators and improve program evaluation. The work we do towards ambitious goals set in the mandate will include the establishment of new indicators and a greater focus on program evaluation. Madam Chair, as I have said many times, one of my specialties is an accreditation in best practices. Therefore, we are going to be doing more measurable outcomes throughout the GNWT over the next four years. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Great to get that commitment out of the Premier, that she is going to be working and her Cabinet colleagues will be working towards developing ways of measuring local food production and consumption. That was, I think, something that we had recommended in the last Assembly as well when we reviewed the agricultural policy or strategy that was developed in the last Assembly. No further comments, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Madam Premier, did you have any comments? Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will take that as a comment, and I am looking forward, also, to having measurable outcomes for a lot of areas in the government. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. I am really encouraged by this mandate, because it just says "small communities." The small community harvesters, they have harvesters' programs that help people go out on the road. Yes, we do have roadkill in Fort Providence. We get the bison. I have had it myself. We made dry meat out of it. It was all good.

This would really help if you had a survey of the hospitals or centres, institutions, of the people who attend those situations, what type of food they would like. It is different all over, for the Dene people, the Inuvialuit. They have certain types of

taste, but even for the small communities, because I really hope that they have testing and inspection stations that are in the communities, because that is where the people are, who will do the harvesting and whatnot of the foods.

I am really hoping that that will happen. I just don't know if that is, kind of, the game plan moving forward, or else there is going to be a central station that you have to send your meat to so that it is harvested somewhere else and not in the small communities where you have a lot of harvesters there. We get lots of people who go out on the river, and they can make the dry fish, too, the dry meat out on the river. Plus, some of the elders, too, they like soft foods. There are soft foods like porcupine, the beaver. They like to have boiled fish, probably, in the hospital system. We have to think of all those areas when we are talking about increasing food security.

I am just wondering if you could paint a picture for me, because this will be probably some kind of report by the time that we are done our session. I wish that this could be escalated to move ahead. Can you paint a picture for me of what you envision from your department on how you are going to move on this mandate? Mahsi.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for the comments. The Member is absolutely correct. A lot of the harvesting happens in the smaller communities, fishing, hunting, et cetera, but we also have a market in the regional centres as well, for example, our community gardens. I recognize that it is totally different, so this mandate will go across all regions and all small communities.

We talked about how one of our mandates, as well, is regional decision-making, but it is bigger than that. It is about really looking, when we allocate positions, where they are best situated. Thank you, Madam Chair. We will take into consideration the needs of people in small communities as we develop positions.

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

MR. BONNETROUGE: Thank you. Just a final comment regarding the regulatory framework, that I hope they really keep the small communities in mind when you are setting your legislation and everything, because I know that government has a hard time thinking of the small people and how they can move forward, when they are thinking about locally produced and harvested foods. Mahsi.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, we will take into consideration as we develop the programs, as we develop all programs, where they are best situated. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to meat inspection, in the past, we had a pig farm there in Hay River, which provided that for sale, and there were regulations in place at that time. Are those regs still relevant to what we have in this mandate? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. If I can direct the question to the Minister of Health and Social Services on the current regulations. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. I do want to talk about, today, the agriculture strategy, which maybe some of the Members are referring to. It is the public health regulations. The question we ask ourselves is: what are we doing as a department to support the agricultural strategy and food security? Our department helps social services, along the Departments ENR, ITI, and Lands, we are all working together to implement the agricultural strategy. Our main goal here is to ensure that public health is protected in the production and sale of local foods. Also, our work supports the priority of this Assembly, of course, to increase food security by facilitating the local production of food and the sale of food.

If I can, I do want to speak a little bit about the Food Establishment Safety Regulations. Changes to the Northwest Territories Food Establishment Safety Regulations under the Public Health Act came into force on August 15, 2019. These changes supported the last Assembly's priority to move forward on this agricultural strategy and also support this Assembly's priority to increase food security. The changes made it clear that farm gate sales of locally grown, low-risk foods are allowed. It also makes it easier for people to sell locally grown and home-produced foods from home and at farmers' markets.

Those are some of the things that our department is working on. I know that we are responsible for the

health act and the Food Establishment Safety Regulations, so I just wanted to bring that forward. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess the question was: the meat inspection regulations, are they still relevant today? I think they were in place when we had a pig farm in Hay River, and there was processing going on. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. My understanding is that, yes, the meat regulations are still in place, but that is what we are going to be doing: reviewing and amending all regulatory frameworks to look at all barriers. We have to be conscious that safety has to also take a play in that. We are not just going to allow a free-for-all. There has to be a safety element, but some of our regulations might be a little bit too stringent in this modern age, so we will be looking at them all. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. The other issue, I guess, is we do have that agricultural strategy in place, and I am hoping that we do something with it. In talking to some of the growers in the area, one of the problems they have is that, in the South Slave, there is no access to land. It is a big problem. They are allowed a little portion there, and they tried to move out past their lot lines there, and I am sure that Lands will go after them at some point for that. I am just wondering if there is anything that we could do in the South Slave to allow some lands to be opened up, even if it is on a yearly basis, to assist in the development of that agricultural sector. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this time, it might be a little bit too early to make a commitment on yes or no. However, Lands is also part of the process that will be reviewing all its policies and regulations to identify the barriers that impede local food production, so they are part of the review that is happening. Again, we have to identify the barriers before we can identify what regulations need to be changed, so I can't make a commitment at this time to say yes, that will happen. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. The other thing that was brought up to me, as well, is that some of the producers hire people and they are paying basically minimum wage. They are wondering if there is any financial assistance they can get to offset those wages for workers. The workers may not be there eight hours a day, but they are just looking for some options. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know there might be. I am trying to think on the run here. I believe there may be some work supplement things happening. If not, Madam Chair, I know that anyone who is under a certain income level, even if they are working, can still qualify for income support. If people are low-income, I really recommend that they go and apply to see if there is any support we can give them within the GNWT. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess before my time runs out I had better talk about the fish plant. Basically, where are we on the construction of that? Are we making any headway, or have we begun looking at it again? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Madam Chair, I would like to transfer it to the Minister of ITI, but if we could ask the Member to repeat his question for the Minister, that would be helpful. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Member for Hay River South, could you repeat your question?

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: With respect to the fish plant, where are we on looking at going forward with the construction of it? I know it was stalled because of pricing, so I am just wondering if we have got a plan in place. I hear rumours, and I just kind of want to get the straight goods from the Premier or the Minister. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: I think we talked about this earlier on in session. When the bids came in on the fish plant originally, they were much larger than the GNWT had allocated budgets for. I

am seeing here in my notes it was about almost \$6 million more than we had anticipated. The last that we discussed was that we are back looking at the actual design of the plant and how we can scale down maybe what was too ambitious of a project to begin with, and how we can bring that design back down under the budgeted price that we had anticipated. I believe that is exactly where we are right now, is revamping that plan. I am just trying to look here if the department has given me a date. I don't have a specific date for that completion, but I can definitely commit to the Member that I would return and get him that information. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Like I said, for Hay River, that is a very important industry, and for, I think, communities around the lake. We have got stock there. We don't have to feed it. It is just waiting to be caught and go in the frying pan, so we have to take this seriously. The other thing is that I guess I am concerned that sometimes the expertise we use within the communities, we use the bureaucracy and the bureaucrats who don't quite have that expertise, but they may think they do. I want to make sure that we actually have somebody who knows, who can provide us with some sound advice on how to proceed with this to make sure that it works. Over the years, we have tried and we have tried, and we don't seem to get anywhere. If I can get a comment on that? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: I will keep it really short. We are working with Memorial University out of Newfoundland to work on the design of the fish plant, so we are looking to experts for that advice; but noted. I take the Member's concerns in note and will make sure that they are addressed. Thank you.

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

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have been looking at this one. Affordable food is so important, and you look at food indexes and the price of just a basic bag of groceries costs in the territories, just insane prices in the small communities. Again, I have said this a couple of times, I always think about the single parents in the small communities, and any sort of fluctuation affects those vulnerable sectors. That is what I would like to see. Right now, I am looking at things like the greenhouses and community gardens. It says they want to ensure supports in this document, so my question to the Premier is: what kinds of supports are we proposing

to help out with greenhouses and the lot? Mahsi cho.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like the Minister of ITI to answer what kinds of supports are available for greenhouse operations. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Just one moment, please, while I look through my numerous binders here for greenhouses. I know we do have supports in place for greenhouses. My apologies.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Madam Premier?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this point, we don't have the information, but we can get back to the Member on the exact types of supports that are available to greenhouses. I know that we are trying to build greenhouses in every community. I don't know the exact support, but we will reply. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. NORN: Thank you. I appreciate that. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for the response. It is good to hear, just to find out what we can get. I think, the way I look at it, any sort of ways we can lower the cost of living and groceries. I keep on going back to the example if you are a struggling family and you only have \$100 to spend on groceries, it is so much easier to get unhealthy foods. It would be nearly impossible to feed a small family with \$100 and try to follow the Canada Food Guide. I am hoping we move in this direction. This is not so much a question, but more of a comment. I hope we keep on moving in that direction, keep chipping away at the costs for our vulnerable sectors. What I mean by that is the single-parent families, our elders, disabled. If we help those, it will be good for everybody across the board, and I am hoping that we keep moving in that direction. That is all I have to say. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. I will take that as a comment. Are there any further questions on "Increase food security through locally produced, harvested, and affordable food"? Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Can I just get some clarification? The government confuses me. We have a "what we heard" report for

agriculture, and now we have an agricultural strategy that goes to 2022. Has that agricultural strategy been implemented, or are there plans to develop an action plan? That is not in here. Can I just clarify also, perhaps, whether, whenever we have a strategy, the next step is then an action plan? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Personally, I am not big on strategies, action plans, new strategies, new frameworks, new action plans, but I am open to feedback from all Members. If the Member is recommending that we would do an action plan, then I am open to hearing those comments. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: No. I guess what I am asking for is perhaps for EIA to create some consistency across departments, especially in this one, which is led by ITI, Health, ENR, and Lands. I am looking at the agricultural strategy, and I believe it covers off almost everything that is in here. There are a lot of amazing recommendations. It is clear a lot of them have not been accomplished, it goes to 2022. Would the Premier be able to provide an update on the status of the recommendations in our agricultural strategy?

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Absolutely, we will have the Department of ITI offer a briefing to standing committee. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier. All right. Are there any further questions on "Increase food security through locally produced, harvested, and affordable food"? Seeing none, committee will move to page 32, "Increase the number and variety of culturally-respectful, community-based mental health and addictions programs, including aftercare." Questions. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a few questions on this page. I will start maybe right in the middle. In the second section, under "How we will do it," it reads, "Establish medical detox and managed alcohol programming." I am wondering if the Premier can speak to where Cabinet sees those being located, if they will be central to Yellowknife, or if these services will also be available in the communities across Northwest Territories? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. This will have to be determined as we move forward with implementing the program. However, I do want to say that medical detox and managed alcohol are very specific programs that have to be monitored properly by medical professions. This isn't just giving out free drinks to everyone and hoping that they survive it. It would have to be in places that they have the capacity, the health centres that have the capacity, to be able to do this. At this point, we haven't defined exactly where. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. My next question is in the same section. In the last column, it reads, "nine transitional housing units added in several communities." I am wondering how Cabinet will decide where those transitional housing units will be located? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Madam Chair, again, these are new mandate issues. These were developed within Cabinet within the last couple of months, so the actual identity of where the transitional housing hasn't been determined yet. We are willing, as soon as we identify them, then we can bring it forward to committee. The Minister of Health and Social Services want to expand on that? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIAN THOM: To maybe just go back to the first question on the availability of the models is the examining models before determining locations to answer the first question. I do want to talk about the transitional housing options. The department will review leading practices and research on transitional housing models, aimed at supporting individuals returning from facility-based addictions treatments. That means consulting with communities, Indigenous leaders, to identify regional and community needs for transitional housing.

We will also be doing a needs assessment with individuals who are attending these facilities for their treatments to better understand their barriers to housing, recovery, and then develop some options for partnerships with other governments. We talked about there are so many times when we have our clients come out of treatment and there is

nothing for them afterwards. This is something the department needs to work with other departments: income support, housing. It is a full-approach model. We also see this work as a priority because the availability of the safe sobriety housing is also a key piece in the recovery. Although our locations are not yet determined, it is just looking at individual needs as they come out of facilities. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. I completely agree with the Minister that it is an essential part of the recovery to have somewhere to go to when you are done your treatment. I think if we ended up polling our communities, we would find that 33 communities would identify that they need transitional housing, so I guess I am wondering: if the need is there in all 33 of our communities, how are we going to decide where to distribute nine units? Thank you.

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

HON. DIAN THOM: I was looking at my notes. The locations have not been determined yet, but it is something that we would have to do a needs assessment. Although it is in our timeline and in our mandate to be able to look at, "Okay. Where is it best suited for individuals?" and again, working with my colleagues in housing, because this is infrastructure, transitional housing, so I understand that we recognize it as a priority. We just need to do further work in finding out where are the best locations, who is the target group, so that is work that we need to do, Madam Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you for that. My next question is: it is actually the very last line on the page, "Reduce wait times for access to treatment centres." Sorry, to treatment, we'll just call it "treatment" right across the board. It is my understanding that we are going back out for RFP later this year for our treatment facilities. I am just wondering why reducing the wait times has a timeline of the very end of our term, if that is something that we have the ability to have an effect on this?

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The title "What will we do" is "Strengthen community counselling services." Waitlists are regarding that. You can't reduce the wait times for access unless we have other options to do it. This is one that we do have statistics, so

we do have a percentage that we want to lower it by, hopefully. We can't lower that until we have stronger peer support groups, until we have managed alcohol groups, all those things that are being implemented before will help us with the wait times. That is why it is at the end. It is because we need all of the other programs and support to support people from actually relapsing or people getting into hard uses of alcohol and drugs. All of those things have to be in place first. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. My last question today, or not today, for this page has to do with actually under the first one. During election month, we heard a lot of talk about on-the-land addictions recovery and mental health, wellness options. We also heard yourself, am I allowed to say the Chair, talk about the experience you had at the Arctic Wellness Foundation out by the multiplex in a Member's Statement very recently. I am a little worried that on-the-land, to me it looks slightly less large than I would like to see it. I am just wondering if you are comfortable speaking about where Cabinet would like to go with on-the-land options for people both in Yellowknife, but then also, more importantly, in our communities? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The difficulty when you are dealing with alcohol and drug use is: the GNWT alone can't solve this issue. We need a community as a whole to be able to address this. We do support things like in Yellowknife, in our capital, the wellness camp behind the arena there, those are good things, but we also, in the smaller communities, we need to engage. Our whole Cabinet is on that. We need to engage with Indigenous governments, and they have their own traditional methods of healing people. It is very disrespectful for us not to take that into consideration. We haven't defined what they would look like more so. We have defined that we need to work with Indigenous governments. It is appropriate. They know their people. They know their communities. They will tell us what they need. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. In the last Assembly, the social development committee spent quite a bit of time on the issue of aftercare for people returning from treatment in the south. One of the things that we grappled with, and I don't see

here but is an important part, is how to measure success. There are people, as you know, go and start treatment and don't complete it. There are people who go and complete treatment and stay sober for the rest of their lives, and there is everything in between. Do you have some thoughts about how to evaluate the results of improving the services for aftercare for people who have addictions treatment? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, measuring success is really an objective kind of philosophy. For a young child, perhaps coming from a family of parents who drink frequently, success was one day sober. For other people, it might be longer. What we have done, the number of individuals requiring a return to treatment is reduced, and the length of time between treatment is increased are the ways that we will measure. I do want to qualify that success may not mean that less people, more time before rehab treatment. Again, those things might not be the success. I think it is an individual family measurement of success. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you. I think that is an interesting philosophical discussion about what success is in this case. One possibility is: who goes to treatment, and have they been before? I think there are some more nuanced questions that are available which may have to be learned through interviewing people. That is, they consent to being interviewed, and they talk about what kind of triggers led them to relapse or what kind of services were very helpful and so on. I think this is an area that could really use a special focus on evaluation and monitoring so that we are clear that for all the services that we now provide and want to provide in the future, that they are providing the best amount of help possible for those individuals. My next question has to do with the nine transitional housing units. I am not clear where nine comes from. Why nine and not 99? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The nine comes from just trying to be reasonable about what we feel that we can accomplish in the life of this Assembly. When we first put out distance learning, which wasn't during my term but I did take part in it, they were wise in that they said they would do five a year. That way, they were able to keep that commitment. This year,

you will see that there will be 20. If we would have said 99, we wouldn't have made it. Start with nine. Each year, we'll try to improve. If we break this, this is not our bible. This does not mean that we only do nine, and in two years, that we won't look at more. This is our minimum. Hopefully, minimum. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I can see potential, for example, to having, let's say, the sale of Arnica goes through to the Yellowknife Women's Society of having a number of spaces available there to people returning from treatment. That would be a start on stabilizing people who are returning from treatment. What we hear and what you know from your own work life is that, when people return from treatment and they go back to couch surfing, that they are more likely than not to relapse because they don't really have the positive reinforcement for the changes they are trying to make. My last question in this area has to do with the alcohol strategy. How does that fit within this mandate area? Is it something that will pull these different pieces together, or is it something that is separate? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Two things: one, like I said earlier, we can't do this alone, so we are open to partnerships. If something like the Arnica Inn came and they were offering something or an Indigenous government, we would be open to partner with that, so we might do it. The other thing to manage alcohol is kind of on its own. It kind of combines, and yet it is on its own. I am going to try to be politically correct because I respect the people that I spent 20 years working with, is that there are people, Madam Chair, that the level of addiction and the damage that has happened is so astute, that to ask them to go from using constantly from their wake up until they go to bed, to actually go to rehab, you are looking at medical problems, then. What's DT's called? The withdrawal from it is going to be huge. Managed alcohol has been utilized in many different jurisdictions. It is being shown to work.

I think in the last Assembly, I was fortunate to go with the Minister of Health. We went down to a program, I believe it was in Toronto. It could have been a different city. They took us there. People that were chronic users were finding success with that. They had to start. They started with the managed alcohol, and then because it was monitored, they eventually got to a place where they could use less. It is part of the answer. It is not

the whole answer. You can't put one treatment for every person. We have to stop doing that. That is what people have done all through centuries. Best practice says you don't make people fit models; you make models fit people. Use what works for all the people that you see. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you. I have also done some reading on managed alcohol programming. I think that it benefits the individuals, and it also benefits the community. There is a lot of criminality that goes with feeding addictions that would be addressed by a managed alcohol program. My last comment in that area is that I realized from the amount of time that I have spent with the people who are with chronic addictions is that not everyone wants to be sober. There are people who are perfectly content to not be sober for the rest of their lives. Obviously, all of this needs to be driven by individuals who want change, and we help them to obtain that change. I think we also have to recognize that we have people who have alcoholism as a chronic health issue, not as a moral failing, but as a health issue. We need to take care of them until the end of their lives, and managed alcohol may be one dimension of that. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Absolutely. I couldn't say it better than the Member said it herself. The managed alcohol program isn't only about getting people off of addictions. It is about harm reduction. The amount of people I have seen in my career that have done horrible things that I won't speak about in this House to actually be able to get a \$5 bottle of beer are horrible stories that I have heard. These people will actually benefit from this program. They may, but they don't have to resort to those methods to feed their addiction. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. GREEN: Nothing further. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. NORN: Mahsi cho, Madam Chair. This one here is very near and dear to me, addiction issues and aftercare. It was a big part of my platform, and I spoke to a lot of people about this. For me, I mentioned before when we did our roundtable, I have been sober for a long time now. I struggled with alcohol for many years, and I am glad to say now, it is been over seven years. You try to lead by

example, and that is what I am doing, but there has to be more than that. You talk to a lot of people who are in pain right now. They are suffering, and you just feel powerless when you go through your campaign. Now we are here. We can do something about this. I am glad we actually put this in.

Again, this is a good item to have on our mandate, but the hows are always the tough parts, how to get there. One of the things that I have looked at was it shouldn't be just the GNWT imposing their will; like, "Here. We are going to have this great, big, bright palace. You are going to go to this and get healed." For me, we should always engage with the communities. I think it is one of those items where the GNWT will fund our communities, our Indigenous governments. Our land is vast. Our cultures are so different between north and south, east and west, and we deal with our sick people differently. Our communities know our people the best, and we know how to best help them.

I look at on-the-land programs, so I guess my question is: would the Premier be willing to go that route, just to fund our communities directly and let them handle their on-the-land programs? Would that be something that the Premier would be interested in looking at? Mahsi cho, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Absolutely. I am glad that the Member recognizes no one model fits all; it is what I have said forever. It is a core to my heart. I believe that we do need community. I have said that. We can't do this alone. We need to be open to working with Indigenous governments; that is why it is in this mandate. What we think in Yellowknife is the answer may not be the answer in Tuktoyaktuk, so we have a responsibility as the GNWT to make sure that we engage with all Indigenous governments so that they define their healing, and then we support them in actualizing the programming. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. NORN: Mahsi cho, Madam Chair, and thank you to Madam Premier for her response. I am just looking at the timelines, here; winter 2020 for a review to be completed. Has there been an active engagement with communities or Indigenous governments to reach this benchmark? Mahsi cho, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Right now, winter 2020 is for the

national jurisdictional review. Engaging with Indigenous governments, I am not sure. I don't know if we have done that at this point. In fairness, Ministers have been busy developing the mandate, developing all the work we have to do, getting familiar with it, and being in session. If the Minister hasn't started this work, I have full faith that she will begin this work as soon as possible. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Another thing, too, is aftercare. It is really important to always follow up with any sort of treatment program and preventing relapse, and I think it is important that we closely track this to measure change, positive change. What measures is the Premier planning to go forward with to help measure this success? Mahsi cho.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Some of this, actually, we can obtain from our database; people who we send out for treatment supports, people who we provide drug and alcohol counselling. That will give us a baseline, and then the goal is to actually reduce that as people are sent out and stuff. We can get baselines. Some of the programs developed and hospitalizations for alcohol, we know how many people go to the hospital, so we can. We already have a baseline; we just need to pull those out. Then we can actually measure success by if our rates of hospitalization, our rates of return to treatment centres, et cetera, are lowered. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have got one more question. I know that the Member for Thebacha, she is not here right now, but I know that she mentioned that Salt River and Poundmaker's had a program in place, and it met with some success, from what I have been told. With these partnerships with these treatment centres down south, would the Premier be willing to work with some of these treatment centres in the South and bring some of their programs and some of the people up North to try to work with them to get into the communities? Mahsi cho.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think that question would probably

be best answered by our Minister of Health and Social Services. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Madam Premier. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. I do want to talk about the facility-based addiction treatments we have in the South. We have four that we work with currently. It is the Poundmaker's Lodge, which is located in St. Albert. We also have the Fresh Start Recovery Centre, which is in Calgary. We also have the Aventa treatment centre for women, which also is in Calgary, and we have the Edgewood Treatment Centre, which is in Nanaimo. This is something, our continued partnership with the facilities in the South, and it is important to know that, as we look at the mandate, bringing services closer to home, if there is a model out there that our department can mirror to bring that closer to home, then definitely that is something our department will look into. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Anything further, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh? Thank you, Member. Next on my list is the Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am just looking at this priority. In "Strengthen community counselling services," I kind of look at it as more taking a position that we have a medical social worker in the hospital in Inuvik who deals with clients who are in the hospital. We have child welfare social workers, but we don't have case workers or outreach workers, in our community, at least, anyway, I don't know how it is in Yellowknife, for our vulnerable population, for our homeless, for our people with addictions, for our people who are having housing issues. If they were to go for treatment, coming back, we have mental health and addiction counsellors who send them off, and then they come back, but they are not really linked with housing and all those types of things.

I am just trying to figure out a way that, maybe with increasing some of this work, the social workers, to have an adult outreach social worker for our homeless population fit in here, or training a specific social worker to work with these populations, that is an outreach, so they don't have to go into this hospital. They are at the homeless shelter. They are at the wet shelter. They need somebody who can reach out to them. We know, as Indigenous people, we don't really go looking a lot of times, unless we are really sick and really need help. We just need someone there who can put their hand out and we can start to trust and work with. I ask if that somehow can be looked at, especially in our regional centres where the

homeless population is higher. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. What the Member is talking about, I believe, kind of looks like our integrated service delivery program that we have offered. It is the model that we are moving toward. It is not going to happen overnight. There are financial limitations, professional ability, training, all those things. However, we are working closer within departments, and some things are already happening that weren't in here, because we didn't put everything in here and we also don't have things going.

Our child and youth mental health workers who are going into schools, I am ecstatic that that is happening. That is the start. I believe the Member spoke today about the issue of young people; if we can get them when they are younger and deal with their mental health wellness, and help them make better choices through our child and youth mental health workers, through our career Pathways workers within the schools who are going to help try to guide students starting in grade seven, that is the beginning, but we do have to work better towards integrated service delivery. The departments know, all these Ministers know, and all their deputy ministers know, we are expecting in this government that they will work better, not only amongst themselves, but with all stakeholders. That does mean, if you are going to work with all stakeholders, I hate to say it, but I am just going to say it to all government employees: you have to be willing to get out of your offices. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Looking at establishing under here, and I know some other Members have talked about it, the medical detox and managed alcohol programs, I know from my past experience, when clients are wanting to go for treatment in the hospitals, we have always accepted them two to three days before they are going to go, because clinically, they need at least three days to medically withdraw. Some need more, though, if they are every-day, heavy-addiction users.

I am just wondering how, if we are going to be doing this, is it going to be in our hospitals? I do know that these clients can be heavy-load clients, and they would be more of what we call in the practice one-to-one because of their addictions and withdrawing sometimes. This will be a heavy

burden on the budget in a hospital setting. I am just wondering if you could elaborate a little bit on how this might look or if it is going to be in the hospital. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. I do want to talk a little bit about what we are proposing to do around medical detox. The department is exploring some options for medical detox in the Northwest Territories. We are in the process of developing a terms of reference for some of the consultation and research. We will be consulting with residents and Indigenous organizations, as well as healthcare providers, and in addition to that, having a jurisdictional scan to see how detox is offered in other provinces or territories and research some of the best practices for the delivery of medical detox.

Once this has been determined, reviewing the results of our research, and then consult and identify options to move forward for the delivery of medical detox, whether it is through a centralized facility or by using our health centres or other creative options. I mean, that is the whole intent of doing a jurisdictional scan is to find best options and have a look at them and just really come up with an implementation plan. Those are some of the things that our department is doing in terms of the medical detox.

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

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. I hear the Minister talk about research, and I think one thing that people get tired of every time we sit down around the table, and from my past, sitting around watching this table, is we are going to do a research project; we are going to do a scan; we are going to do this. The money that it takes to do that we could just use to pay staff. We don't have a detox place. We are not going to have an ideal detox place in the Northwest Territories because we have regional centres where usually the clients end up, and the only place that has trained professionals is in the hospital.

Would we not just write a territorial policy on how we are going to do detox in our hospitals for clients? That way, doctors are knowing that they can do this, and they can write a prescription, or they can do an admission. Nurses know that they have a standard of practice on what they need to do while they are detoxing, and they can go off to treatment if needed, instead of always doing these scans and spending money on that. I just feel like it is better for our clients to spend that money on

them than to do more research. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am in agreement in that I am more action-focused than research-focused, and that comes from the NGO, where you don't have the time and the money to actually do all the research focus, and you end up just dealing with it. However, when we are talking especially around the managed alcohol programming, we haven't had any experience in that in the Northwest Territories. It would be inappropriate of us to actually take that on and just say, "We are opening it up. We are going to start giving you three ounces a day. Then, in a month, we will give you two ounces, and in a month, we will give you three ounces." We need to look on that model and to find out how that works before we implement that model. The medical detox might be a little bit easier. We have had some experience. It might just be a policy change, but the managed alcohol programming, for sure, I would say that we need to do the research on that program. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. SEMMLER: I agree, because I know we don't have a managed alcohol. I don't know how that is going to work either in all my years, who is going to distribute that, where it is going to be distributed from, but I do feel like we are already doing detox. We just need to legitimately say, "This is what we are doing," and as it evolves, it is kind of like how I look at e-learning or Northern Distance Learning. It evolved. Let's provide this. Let's get it on the books that we are doing this. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Your time is up, so I am going to go to the Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Premier, I guess we have a lot of kids who are needing, more in my riding, help in regard to a whole number of individuals getting seen by proper healthcare. When you are talking to youth these days, they have it tough. Like Lesa said earlier today, we are having a problem with all of the new drugs that are coming into the Delta, the stuff that is happening there. We have to basically try to strengthen our community in regard to counselling services. The counsellors that we have are overworked, and they really need help. Is there any way that you are looking at or the department is looking at increasing counsellors coming into the communities, outlying communities, to talk, not only to our youth, but to our people with residential

school and all of this other stuff that we have to deal with, who need help? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Absolutely. One of our mandates, if you see, is "Strengthening community counselling services," and the bullet is to "Increase support and counselling training opportunities for staff." That will go across. I do want to, again, promote the child and youth counsellors and the Pathways program, who are going into our schools. You are right; our youth are most in jeopardy. If we can catch them when they are younger, deal with their mental wellness, if we can give them alternatives, show them that there is hope out there, perhaps we will have less people. I don't believe that people, when they are young, decide one of their career choices is, "I am going to be an alcoholic or a hard drug user." I have never heard a child say that. That tells me that somewhere in between their childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, they made bad decisions, and so we need to interact then. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just on the timeline, fall 2022, is there any chance of that moving up to getting our front-line workers help into the small communities? They are overworked now, and they need help. It is not so much training; it is just maybe an extra person to give them a hand. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know that the Member didn't want training, but training is spring 2021. We are doing standardized screening and assessment tools to help people, to assess people. These timelines were defined between "be conservative because we are going to get slaughtered; we don't have enough money" and "be bold because we want to see some progress." It was kind of an in between. Some of these mandates we were already working on. Departments are already on. If we can get them done sooner, I would be the strongest advocate to get them done sooner. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Madam Premier. Member for Nunakput, just wait till your light goes on, and go ahead.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. "Improving services for individuals of addictions." It is a big thing to send people out, and I am happy. A

lot of people back home, they are taking that initiative upon themselves and trying to get help. We are pretty good with timing to get them sent out, but it is when they come back home. There is no mechanism for helping them when they come back home and when they have got to say, "No." Is there any plans to work with the communities or even with our community corporations in regards to helping our people that we have with addictions that come home, a support mechanism, either on-the-land or from the South with the four facilities, the four places that they do go? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Absolutely. In addition to the transitional housing that we are looking at because not all people can go home to their same home environment. It might not be the healthiest home environment. They might need some space. We are also looking at increasing our community-based peer support programs such as AA and Sobriety. They are not the only two models that I am attached to. We are open to seeing what the community say are models, and then the other one is working with our partners, Indigenous governments. They know best. We are open to ideas. We said over and over we cannot do this alone. We need to do this in partnership with the whole community, the whole NWT, and the federal government. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, in regards to that. Thank you, Madam Premier for that. I really like what I hear. I look forward to working with different health departments on getting some help for the people that we represent because we know everybody back home. Everybody, we know the troubles that everybody is going through. Just because somebody is smiling, it doesn't mean it is okay. Thank you for those answers. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Are there any further comments on the mandate item, "Increase the number and variety of culturally-respectful, community-based mental health and addictions programs, including aftercare?" Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Most of my life, I have been in business, so this is going to be kind of business-related. I don't hear anything in here with respect to providing support to people who have addictions but are employed and working in small business because small

businesses don't have the money to provide the support that may be required, and sometimes that support is good. I guess I put myself as employer, and the people I have working for me, they felt comfortable enough to come and talk to me about their problems and their issues. Hopefully, throughout life, I have helped a few people. I guess you have got training dollars out there for the trades and whatever else, but it would be nice to see, something to assist employers to maybe bring somebody in once in a while just to have talks with employees. We have tried that before, and it seems to work.

I think that, most of the people I have had working for me have been Indigenous people. They have been from around the Northwest Territories. Like I said, I think they felt comfortable around me. I just see a benefit there, and we seem to ignore that. We look south for the answers, or we look other places, and we have tried stuff. It works sometimes. Sometimes, it doesn't work. We keep throwing money at plans and strategies and all that. Myself, I would like to see it go where it counts the most, and that is to help people. I guess the question is: do we have anything in place to assist people with addictions in the workplace? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to start with: do we have anything in the future? Do we have in existence? We need to be open to all ideas as we move forward. What do we have currently? Again, I am going to try to be politically correct. Not all people that have addictions are unemployed. In fact, the vast majority of them, I am guessing, may be employed. You have to have money to pay for your addictions. My father was a great weekend warrior. I don't know if people know that term. Come to me later if you don't understand the term. All of these services actually are for people, not only unemployed but employed. The community counselling that you can get from adults, the peer support programs we are talking about. AA is available for anybody. It is not a requirement you are employed or unemployed. I think Indigenous governments, what they do on the land, people might be willing to work with them, but we need to be open to ideas. I have heard you. I hear the need. We will discuss it and the idea of how we can support employers better. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: I thank you for that, and you are right. We do have to look at anything that

comes forward because if we can piece something together and make it whole, then that is kind of what we want. It is up to us, I think, as government, in the bureaucracy, to go out and talk to the people. It is kind of like the training for trades and that. You bring somebody in, talk to all the employees. It would be nice to do the same with counsellors as well. It is not hard to do. For me, you will just call somebody up and say, can you come over, but not everybody can do that. Sometimes, people are just so busy trying to make a living. I think we have to take it upon ourselves to find ways to make it easier for people to assist in dealing with these issues. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. I didn't hear a question. Did you want a response? Thank you. Are there any further questions on addictions and aftercare? Seeing none, we will now move onto the second last mandate item which is "Increase the number of resident healthcare professionals by at least 20 percent." Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. One of the hardest things, I think, working in healthcare is when you are working with clients and you are working with patients. You are coming in, and you are leaving. You are from another province, or you are in another territory or another hospital. It is so hard as any nurses that are permanent already here, signed on. I don't even think it is nurses. It is lab techs. It is all of them, having rotating co-workers that you are having to basically do your job, orientate almost every shift. It feels like you are constantly orientating. You are doing the job of two all the time. By meeting the needs of the numbers, sometimes we are doing that, but we are also burning out our own staff that are here and dedicated and living here. That is one thing I just wanted to bring up. It is not just that we have a shortage. It is that we are burning out the ones that are here, and maybe that is why they are also leaving, or you are seeing the majority of the ones that are here go half-time or quarter-time because they just don't want to be there all the time.

What I want to ask is, would the Premier or the Minister, commit to making sure that in this, or if it is HR, to do exit interviews with all healthcare staff that are leaving, to make sure that they are being done. I know that that might be a way to capture it. April 1st is coming up, and if we could do a scan of all of the health professionals who are leaving, maybe, who were permanent, and maybe do a scan of job shares that we have, to see why they won't sign on or stay. I could probably give you some answers, but it would be good to have that stuff documented, so that, over the next year, if we were able to do that, then we would have some concrete reasons why we can't keep them or why they are leaving. That is one thing that I would like

to ask for a commitment from this mandate. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. With having a large hospital in the capital city, actually, I think most of the Yellowknife MLAs, correct me if I am wrong, but myself, for sure, during the campaign, the amount of nurses, doctors, and healthcare professionals in my riding was phenomenal. Literally, people were crying at the door, and I heard it very clearly. "It is not the money. We don't need the money. We are making good money. We need the break; we need the time. You are killing us." I heard that, and I carry that forward with me because we need to take care of not only the people needing services, but the people providing services.

You will see in here that we talk about working about employees and partners to identify factors contributing to retention challenges. You can ask them, but the best way, sometimes, to get the retention strategies and what the difficulties are is exit interviews. I am not going to commit to every single employee getting an exit interview, because I have done exit interviews in my past. You have the great intention, but sometimes people walk off the job. We will add exit interviews within our programming, and you will also notice that the whole priority is to get more people here, but we have talked about retention. This is about recruitment and retention; keep the ones that we have. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. The other thing would be, too, just so that it is out there, and I know that some of the conversations that we are having today is kind of helping to help the departments with ideas. I know that, when we are bringing up casuals or terms, because that is what usually ends up happening, especially in my region. I was a hiring manager, so this was the reality to have people to take care of patients. The permanent staff, again, were very frustrated, because they couldn't get their holiday. You work, and if you have been there for 20 years, I think it is after seven years, you can get up to six weeks of vacation time, but you are very limited on when you can use it. A lot of these people are permanent, so it is like, "I can give you two weeks or three weeks in the summer. You can't use any more than that." Sometimes, it means, "We don't have any staff. You are not getting holidays," but you are permanent. Then we have casuals, terms, who can pick and choose when they want to come, and we have no control over that. Then, when they are here

for a period of time, like, if they are a one-year term, they will get the training allowance. They will get this, and they will get that.

People who are signed on permanently don't get any more perks; they actually get less. These people are being flown in and out. It is almost like you get a free VTA if you stay as a term or a locum. You are getting a VTA all the time. We don't do VTAs, but this is the way that we need to have staff to take care of our residents. Permanents don't get to travel in and out. They get their northern living allowance on their paycheque, like everyone else. So do the terms; they get their northern living allowance. There is not a lot of strength in saying, "You are essential, and you are important. We need to make sure to keep you permanent." When I became a manager, when they were leaving, they were actually living in my community, but they were doing terms because they were like, "At least I can get holidays, and I can pick and choose. I don't have to work Christmas. I don't have to work the summer. I don't have to work spring break when my kids are off." We don't need this kind of a system, and I don't know how we are going to fix that, because I know there is going to be union involved, but I really think that that needs to be looked at. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Those are some of the ideas that we are hoping to draw out as we work with employees and partners to identify the factors contributing to retention. I am a social worker, it is kind of close, but I don't deal with blood. The reality is that I am thinking that the fact that we don't have enough healthcare professionals might be one of the biggest issues that we have with that. People do need to have holidays. We do need to keep them. I do believe that GNWT has strict policies on those things. If we are saying you can't, it is because we don't have enough staff. We need to get staff in. We need to figure out how we are getting them here. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. I see it in a lot of the fields. We have ultrasound; we get this big influx of people who need to have an ultrasound when we get an ultrasound tech. Since we have had our permanent radiologist x-ray tech leave, we haven't been able to secure one in our region permanently, and they are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and then working during the day. It is just a really unhealthy situation to be a staff in that. I look forward to this mandate growing legs and getting moving. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Did you want a response to that? That was a great image. Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just in regard to the nursing problems that we are having in our communities, with locums and stuff, the more locums we could get, the better, because I have about two and a half inches of paper, yellow sheets, that get faxed to me every day, reduction of core services in our community, and that is always with healthcare, them being overworked. Is there any plan in regard to getting more nurses, going out on hiring forums or something like that, to get more nurses for the communities? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. That is part of the recruitment strategy, absolutely. We need to have a strategy, but we need to start getting down into places like universities and colleges that we can actually attain things. When I did my degree in social work, one of the best things I had seen every year was having people come and say, "We have jobs for you. Come and get a job." Both of my sons are in post-secondary now, and the same thing, they are saying this is one of the best things about us.

There are places out there. We need to figure out what we are doing, and we need to get out there, and we need to attract those people who are just graduating. Of course, taking people who are in the field already, selling the quality of life in the North, because we can't; they are not competing with the wages across Canada. It is an issue. However, we have special things in the North, promoting what we have, and getting into those universities and colleges where we can actually get the new workers. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just in regard to that, Madam Premier, is there a way that you know from the hospitals, like in the Beaufort-Delta and for Inuvik, loaning nursing staff to our communities to make sure that people are being seen? When it is being shut down, you have to make appointments in the small communities. Staff is overworked, but the appointment part, people have to be seen. Is there any way that they could help out, I guess, on the HR side? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. I hear the Member's concern. One of the difficulties we have in our communities is the hiring, like finding the specialized nurses and the doctors or whoever it may be. They find the cost of living is quite high. Finding them housing is another challenge. These are challenges that we get right across the whole Northwest Territories. I hear the Member's concern about having specialized nurses or doctors come more frequently in the community. We need to look at that. That is important. Now, you find in some of the smaller communities, they just go make appointments on their own at bigger centres because they don't want to have these wait times. We see that. We know this is happening, and we need to do a better job as a department to recognize that and be able to look at different ways of making sure our patients are seen more quickly. That is important.

I would like to speak about the Member's previous concern about the recruitment. What we are doing as a department is we are developing three talent pools in order for recruitment. One is for the health and social service professionals, which includes the nurses; we are also doing one for physicians and also one for students. We want to engage students and youth earlier so we can get them engaged and seeking employees for the future. These are some of things that we are doing, we are looking to do, as a result of achieving our mandate. There are a lot of different things that we need to look to our departments to come up with faster ways so that our patients have better quality services. Even our regional staff, I am just told recently that some of our regional staff don't even have staff to lend, as I look across the floor, and it is true. We need to start looking at all of the different centres and the regions and making sure that we have enough resources in the centres to be able to have patient care. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister of health. Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. No. Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Madam Premier, in regards to that. In the communities that I represent, we have apartments on top of our health centres. There are four apartments per health centre, and we are blessed for that for sure because you don't have to wait too long. You have just got to walk down the stairs. I am really very thankful for the staff that we have there, but they are just overworked. There has got to be a way that we could try to help them, to get more staff to help alleviate the pressure. They don't have to stay for long, a couple of weeks, maybe, or a month or

something, just to get the job done, to make sure that they are seeing the constituents. Some of them are fighting cancer. There are so many different aspects and different stages of it, and we are trying. I talked to you before about getting a task force, like something to go into the communities to do pre-checks on constituents, especially further north, because, like I said, the flights to get out of the community into Inuvik to see a doctor on their own, it is just they can't do it. That is more of a comment, Madam Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Are there any further questions on this page, "Increase the number of resident healthcare professionals by at least 20 percent"? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. You had better start the clock again. I don't expect a lot of time on this, but I am just wondering what role could or should scholarships play with regard to recruitment. That is probably something longer-term, so scholarships as a tool and also whether the Premier and Cabinet see any links to the polytechnic. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Those are ideas that we are searching for, ideas of putting scholarships, so when we do our recruitment plan, those are the kind of things that we are looking for suggestions from. We will be gathering that feedback. Is there a link with the polytech? I would like to say "absolutely" right now. However, we made a commitment with the polytech that we would be going out in the fall to do a survey, find out from people what we should specialize in. In that regard, it would be inappropriate for us to make a commitment until we have done that work. The Minister of Education, Culture and Employment might want to expand on that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Madam Premier. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair, and the Premier is absolutely correct that it is too early to say what we are going to be doing at the polytechnic university, but one thing about universities is that they are willing to put on programming. If the government has money and it wants to fund a program that would help increase healthcare professionals, that is something the college would probably gladly do. Those are the kind of opportunities we will have going forward. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. One of the concerns I have with this one is: I recognize it is best practice to increase resident healthcare workers and that we should be training as many nurses and getting as many nurses as possible. Right now, the case is that we cannot find those nurses and that locums are really filling the gaps. One of the beautiful things about locums is they are brought up here and they can immediately jump into a position, or at least that is the goal.

My concern with this is that what we may see is that we want more resident people, so we are going to start getting rid of the nurses we are currently bringing up from down south. I am looking for a commitment that we are not going just simply start using fewer locums without actually having the nurses in place. I think this is a long-term goal to actually reach. I know the health authority has posted a deficit. They just came packed with another supplementary, and one of ways that you could maybe cut costs is: let's stop bringing up so many locums. However, I am afraid if we do that the situation is going to get worse, so I am looking for some sort of commitment that we don't stop bringing up nurses from down south until we have those positions filled.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is a long-term goal. I think it would be very inappropriate for anyone to just discontinue what we have. The priority is to increase the number of resident healthcare professionals by at least 20 percent, yet the priority does not say about decrease the number and then increase. If we are providing services to our residents in the North as public servants, which we should be, and we already know we have a shortage, it would just be illogical for us to stop using locums until we have that filled. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, and I am glad to hear that. My other concern or one I would like to see with this is: I have raised a number of times some more flexible positions, some more part-time positions. I have a number of constituents who are retired nurses. They are not willing to go out for a full-time nursing position, but they would gladly come back at casual or part-time. I think that is another one of those things is that we really have to do whatever we can to retain people, and that may involve being a little flexible in our hours or creating

some different positions. I am wondering if that is part of that in any of these items here, looking at some kind of alternative ways, whether it be part-time or casual, to make sure we can retain anyone who is willing to work here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Anyone?

--Laughter

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you. I will start by saying we do want qualified people in our healthcare professions, so I just want to clarify that. Our number one "How we will do it," if we say we are going to work with employees and partners to identify the factors contributing to retention challenges and we don't take those ideas into consideration, then again we are hypocrites and we should not even be doing this action. Part of that, if we are going to engage them, is listening to what they say. That, I will commit to. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All right. Are there any further questions on "Increase the number of resident healthcare professionals by at least 20 percent"? Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to echo what my colleague the MLA from Yellowknife North just said in terms of being able to hire retired nurses. I, too, have spoken to a lot of retired nurses who have literally walked out the door and then been told that, if they want to be able to work casual shifts here and there when we are desperate for nurses, that they would do that. Then they have been told that they have to come in and compete in an interview process, and they are just not prepared to do that when they have literally walked out the door. There are people in town who have expressed to me that they are definitely willing to come and do shifts here and there to relieve some nurses who are at the hospital, and so we just have to make that a little bit more doable for them. That is one thing. My question, though, is about staff surveys. When we did our Stanton debriefing, we did hear about staff surveys taking place that were specific to our relationship with our P3 contractor, but I am wondering if these staff surveys are more for staff satisfaction about working conditions and workplace culture. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Absolutely. This is not about how do you like the new hospital, or how do you like the contractor providing food services. This is about how do we keep you and how do we get new people? If you are doing a good survey, you have both closed questions that are very, this is what I want to know, how much time do you want to work sort of thing, and open questions that say: what are some ideas that you would give me? We have to be open to both. This survey will incorporate both some closed questions and some open questions so that we can get all the feedback as appropriate. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Do these surveys preserve the confidentiality of the person completing them, and where do they go? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Confidentiality is a huge issue. I can't say where they go. The Minister might have an idea, but I know that, when I did the housing survey and I went right across the Northwest Territories and asked people, I was worried about people being penalized and being evicted from their homes. I actually picked out a person within the department who I felt I could trust, and that poor person, I made all those surveys go through that person. The Minister does have that authority to decide that, if she so wishes. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. No. I think that is really important. I think one step farther might even be to be able to remove people's names completely because we do live in a very small territory that gets smaller and smaller by the day, and we all get to know one another. If we want people to be 100 percent honest, then we need to make sure that their personal relationships on their work floors are protected in that process. That would be my one recommendation there. Thank you. No further questions.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Any good survey only has information, identifying information, on what is necessary. If we don't need to know your name, if there is no implementation on how we retain and recruit people, then why would I ask it? If we don't

need to know what community, then why would I ask it? However, there are times where you might need to know what community, because the issues might not be the same across the whole of the Northwest Territories. Good surveys are only asking the data that they need. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier. Are there any further questions on "Increase the number of resident healthcare professionals by at least 20 percent?" Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess things have changed with workers nowadays, that includes the doctors and nurses, and people want quality of life. In the past, you could count on doctors and nurses to work 20-hour days. I think those days are gone. Having locums come in here, and nurses, I think that is going to be the standard for a while, and I agree with my colleagues that we can't throw them out to the wind. We should be planning how to best use them to our advantage. Firstly, for quality healthcare for our residents, and the second thing we worry about is the cost.

I guess I am wondering, the healthcare system is, of course, in a deficit. What impact does having to bring locums in, outside medical services and professionals into the North? How does that impact, and are we capturing that back from the federal government? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I was a bit confused about what the actual question was. My guess, and correct me if I am wrong, is that you are asking if the federal government is covering the cost of this. That isn't the case, although healthcare is on the agenda for the federal government and all the Premiers. Premiers across Canada are asking for flexibility within that. I will carry that message forward. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess the other area that we don't tap into, for whatever reason, is through immigration and doctors and professionals from other countries. Why is that? I guess I know why it is, but I want to hear it from you why that is and what we are going to do about it or what we can do about it, working in conjunction with the federal government. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The reason that is, is because there is not one set of standards of care or training or qualifications across the world. For example, I have heard nightmare stories of people in some countries that are pulling teeth on sidewalks. Do you want me to make them your dentist? Those are the things that I am asking. There has to be a quality of care that people need to meet the standards, the Canadian standards of healthcare. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a comment. Actually, I am under the non-insured health benefits, the Indian Affairs, and that is the care we get. Thank you, Madam Chair.

---Laughter

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. I will take that as a comment. Are there any further questions on "Increase the number of resident healthcare professionals by at least 20 percent?" Seeing none, committee, we will move on to page 35, "Create a polytechnic university." Questions? Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: I would like to begin, on behalf of Frieda, saying the headquarters will remain in Fort Smith. Also, I think I would like, on this issue specifically, to move on from the number of conversations that have happened around the president and begin to look to the future. I am very excited about this. I have been to a number of university towns across the circumpolar North, and the key is they are economic drivers. They employ hundreds of people. They are very inspiring. Yukon College, unfortunately, is going to beat us and will become Yukon University in two months. I am going there in two weeks from now to get a tour. They are doing amazing things. I hope we can put a lot of things behind us and get forward on the path. My specific question here is: can we have an update on where we are working with the federal government to access infrastructure funding immediately ongoing? Do we believe we are going to be able to capture that funding, and what is the chance of it being 100 percent funding?

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. What I can say is that, right now, the federal government is looking at a post-secondary strategy for the North. I am guessing, but I am not

100 percent sure if that is just the three northern territories or if that includes northern Quebec, northern Labrador, all of those that sometimes the federal government includes. That, I don't have the answers on. I do know that, right now, when they do give infrastructure funding, it is usually -- not always, but usually -- 75 cents, or 25-cent dollars. As I said in this House before, we are in a place that we need to start asking for more, and I am willing to take that on and start asking for more and explain to them the huge gaps in the Northwest Territories and the territories compared to the southern jurisdictions. I cannot commit, though, that that will happen. I would love to be able to, but no, it is in the hands of the federal government. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know that there have been a number of questions on this, but one of the very exciting things about a university is that, once you actually get it to that point where it is accredited; it has a board of governors; it has a senate; it is arm's length from government; professional universities go and get their own funding. They raise money through endowments. There are lots of donations. The potential for a university to go and get 100 percent funding is much greater than it is for the current Aurora College structure, which is essentially the GNWT going and getting money.

I am just looking through this. Can I get a sense of the timeline of when we expect Aurora College to have a board of governors again? A senate was recommended in the Aurora College review. What timeline can we kind of expect it to be arm's length from the GNWT, and what is the end date we are looking at in that it will actually be a university? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to transfer that question to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will go back to the Member's first question. We don't have big asks out to the federal government right now, because we haven't done the infrastructure assessment. We have a good idea of what we might need, but you need better than an idea before you go asking for money. The work to

determine what infrastructure we are going to need will be done later this year.

The second question that you just asked was about timelines. As I have said before, we are looking at 2022 for a return to a board of governors. The senate would be some time thereafter, and what that senate looks like or what the governance model looks like is still to be determined. I can say that, but that doesn't mean that that is the way that it is necessarily going to be, because we are still early in this. We are still in the phase where we are strengthening the foundation of the college and preparing for the transformation. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am happy to hear 2022 for the board of governors. That is sharing my term, so I can see that step. Hopefully, I will see a senate formed. Then I just want to clarify. This is to transform Aurora College over the next six years. Are we on track, and do we believe that, in 2026, Aurora College will be a university, accredited as such?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. That is what we currently believe. However, I have told the House before and the committees before that this isn't necessarily about getting it done as quickly as possible so we can check boxes. It is about doing it right, and if things need to be pushed back by a season because we are not ready to start a capital project or something like that, or the legislation isn't where it should be, and committee might need more time to look at the legislation, I am willing to make those adjustments to timelines, but as it stands, a lot of work has gone into creating a timeline, and 2026 is what that timeline currently says, and that is what we are aiming for. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Are there any further questions on "Create a polytechnic"? Member for Monfwi.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Chair. Obviously, this has been a critical issue since we first discussed it, a university of the North, a polytech university. We have existing challenges in our communities, I know Mr. Bonnetrouge alluded to on several occasions. He is passionate about it. Our own students are struggling in secondary schools, and here, we are talking about a university in the North. We have three existing campuses and 32 community learning centres. When you look at the three campuses, most of the programs are fairly

empty, and it is been a real challenge over the years.

My view is that we should be building up on those three campuses that we have, instead of creating this polytech university, in my view, anyways, and then focusing on secondary schools. If we don't have graduates coming out of our high schools, what is the purpose of having a university in the North if they are not going to be attending?

Those are just some of the questions that are thrown at me as the Member representing the Monfwi area, and my colleagues, as well. They are getting similar messages. Madam Chair, I guess the big question that I have is this: creating a polytechnic university, is it realistic within this government? Masi.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. As the Minister stated, it might not be in the life of this four-year term that we actually get it done. However, it is realistic to expect that we cannot hold back our people and say that we will not provide the services. The idea of building on campuses, that is what we have been talking about since I was the Minister of Education, since Minister Moses was the education Minister. We are not ripping it apart and starting from scratch; we are building on the strengths that we already have.

Then, Madam Chair, the third point is about what is the use of focusing on post-secondary when we need to focus on our secondary schools. Madam Chair, with due respect, when the Member was the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, he knew there were issues, as well. He didn't just focus on the secondary students. He was the beginning of bringing in junior kindergarten. If that Member was only thinking about the services in place now, he would not have thought about early childhood intervention.

We need to be holistic, Madam Chair. We need to think about early childhood development, having our children ready with developmental skills when they get to school, giving better programming from JK until 12. We are working on that now and, Madam Chair, also having opportunities and hope for our youth so that they cannot access every single post-secondary option in the world, but we have specialized programming in the North that is quality programming. Aurora College already has some programming that is actually proven to be quality. Our nursing programming, everyone I talk to is ranting about that program. Why would we stop? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Chair. We have had tremendously successful programs over the years, and we continue to still see them. Great work has been done in the past. We are continuing to carry that forward. With this particular area, I obviously would like to know if there has been an actual survey of the students across the Northwest Territories on this initiative, if there is a favourable response from the public. I am not just talking about organizations; I am talking about the people of the North, if they are in favour of creating a university in Yellowknife.

We have three campuses. The Minister alluded to how we are building on top of the three campuses. Not if we are creating this university stand-alone campus and having three additional existing campuses. The social work program has been taken away from us. The recreation program is another one. These are just some of the programs that have been successful in the past, but there has been a lack of interest. We should have a clear idea why there is a lack of interest from the general public of the Northwest Territories. A lot of students are going south. We all know that. I went south for university. My kids did, too. If we go around the room here, a lot of our kids have gone off to southern institutions, for various reasons. One of them is the choice that they have.

We will have, eventually, according to the Minister and the Premier, a stand-alone campus here in Yellowknife, a university type, and the three campuses will still continue, but we are not really expanding on the existing campuses that we have, in my view, anyways, if we are strictly focusing on this polytechnic university over the next six years. Who knows? It could be the next 10 years, 15 years. We do not know because we want this to be a perfect institution in the Northwest Territories, in Yellowknife, Madam Chair.

I am not sure what else I can say about this particular area, but one of our prime focuses should be our students in secondary, giving them more opportunities for them to graduate grade 12 and even further, and give them options if they are going to attend our campuses here in the Northwest Territories or south, and building up on the three main campuses and 21 learning centres across the Northwest Territories. That is my view, and I am still questioning this very initiative, this mandate. We have raised that issue before, but obviously, a majority rules. It is here before us, and so we will be discussing it further. Just more of a comment, Madam Chair, at this point. Masi.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Are there any further questions? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I just want to go on record as strongly supporting this initiative. It is something that I raised in my first term, and I continue to believe this is the direction that we can and should be moving in. I think this is part of building a knowledge economy for the Northwest Territories. There are a lot of universities doing work here now. Laurier, Wilfred Laurier, has an office here in Yellowknife. We should be finding ways to build on those partnerships and including that as part of the polytechnic work that we can and should be doing in the future.

Our family, we have two kids who did go away to university. It would be nice if, when they come back here, they could decide that they want to be teachers, professionals, researchers at a university here. We have got to give more options to our kids who did take SFA, student financial assistance, so that, when they come back here, they have more options to get involved in post-secondary education themselves.

What I want to ask the Premier here is: as part of this plan, there are lots of lessons, too, that we can learn from Yukon College. Yukon College is going to become a university this year, and so I know that there is this advisory committee. I am not going to get the right name of it. I think there is representation on there from Yukon College. What sort of lessons can we expect to learn from Yukon College, that we can help out with the establishment of our polytechnic here? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Madam Chair, what I will do is pass it over to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment to answer the question about lessons from the Yukon College. I would also like him to clarify, if possible. At no time have I understood when I was the Minister and this is a new Minister: is the university going to be in Yellowknife? I would like that to be clarified. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. The university, as I see it, will be stretched across the entire territory, and I have a vision of it being in 33 communities. We do not need buildings physically right next to each other to call it a campus. Everywhere the university has a presence is part of

that university. The model of a main campus is an outdated model. It is not something that I am focusing on in this Assembly. I was just down in Smith. They have a beautiful campus down there. It is huge. We need to fill it up. We have a campus here that needs some work, so we are going to have to do something about that. We have a beautiful campus in Inuvik. Again, we have to fill it up. There are learning centres in most communities. Maybe we can have them in all communities. We have got to think big.

I apologize. I know this is Member O'Reilly's time. The question is about Yukon College and lessons learned. The academic advisory council, it is still relatively young. I think there has only been the one meeting so far, unless there has been something very recently, but they are heavy hitters at these universities. There are presidents of universities, not just someone who works at a very low level. They are the top people, and they have a lot to share. They were chosen because of those reasons, that they have transformed into polytechnic universities, that they have a strong Indigenous component to them. I cannot give the Member the exact lessons that we are going to learn. I look forward to briefing committee at some point when people find time. I know it has been a struggle to get time to do those kind of things. At that point, I will be happy to ask the staff, who really can get into the details of that question, and they can relay it to the Members. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I don't mind the Minister using my time to talk about good things. The one component, though, that I do not really see here, it is probably being worked on, is the need to get private donations, as well. Look, one of the discoverers of diamonds made the single-largest-ever donation to a university in Canada, \$50 million to UBC; he also gave \$32 million to Quest University, \$5 million to Vancouver Aquarium, \$12 million to Simon Fraser, \$11 million to the University of British Columbia again. These are people we also have to approach so that they can leave a legacy here in the Northwest Territories. I am just wondering what kind of work we have done to look at philanthropy and partnerships in terms of building a polytechnic here. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will again ask the health Minister to expand on my answer, but I do want to state and I am not sure if I have told him yet, so I might be telling him, is that one of the diamond mines has

already approached us. While I was the Minister, I was not adverse. I will take the support where we need it. The smart thing is to do that. That is the knowledge economy, the money we can bring in. On that, I will pass it over and let the health Minister expand if he so wishes, if the chair allows. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

---Laughter

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Right now, we are in the phase where we are strengthening the foundation of the college, so that type of work, while there have been conversations, we have not aggressively been pursuing that, just because of where we are and that we do not have a regional needs assessment done to know what we are going to look like. We do not have our infrastructure assessment done. It is hard to go out and ask for money for a particular project when we do not have a particular project that we can show. That being said, there are the conversations that the Premier had in her former post, and there are other discussions that are going on. There is interest, and what I am looking forward to is promoting this transformation not just within the territory and getting people excited about it but around the country so that we grow that interest and we get that attention from different groups. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and we have to make the most of it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. NORN: Mahsi cho, Madam Chair. I won't say too much about this, but I think I really need to get this off my chest. I am really, really so supportive. It is good to see that we are moving forward with education and advancing our education and talking about the knowledge economy and attracting investments. This is a good opportunity from that aspect. The only reason I am kind of conflicted about this, again, to what the Member for Monfwi said, a lot of our small communities, a lot of our students from small communities, I feel like they are going to be on the outside looking in. That, for me, is going to be hard. I think we need to do more from an education point of view to help transition our students into a polytechnic.

I know that other universities down south, back in the day, they had transitioning programs. They have a lot of Indigenous programs to transition a lot of Indigenous students into their universities and stuff. I am hoping to see some of that here to have that. Something close to home would be good instead of sending your students down south. This

is something that would be close to home. Again, this is good. All round for me, this is good, but the only thing I am struggling with is just getting our students from the small communities in. I guess I had a question for Madam Premier, if there's any plans to having transition programs for small community students?

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Some of the things, I am going to try and be sensitive, but our youth are already looking on the outside looking in with what they have now. At least, this is going to give them, hopefully, some hope. We are working. We are not ignoring the children in JK to 12. We are working with them as well. A Pathways program is reaching out to children when they are in grade seven to try to give them options. The child and youth mental health workers going in four to nine to try to give supports for wellness. One other thing we haven't talked about is that in the last Assembly when I was the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, I also had concerns for our smallest communities. During my term, I made sure that our smallest communities, there should not be a school with only one teacher left in our NWT. During my term, I made sure that our smallest schools had at least two teachers in them to ensure that those children had the best chance possible at the time. Appreciate the comments. We cannot leave anyone behind is the goal. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. NORN: I am happy to see this news. I am hoping it is done in a very constructive way. Yeah, it is good to hear about the endowment fund. Hopefully, we see something like that. I guess my final comment is, if I ever win the lottery, I will chip in a little bit into that. That is all I have.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess when this first came up and there was talk about the foundational review, I was under the impression that it would be to take a look at Aurora College and make that stronger. Then, for some reason, it morphed into a university, and I am not sure why. I wasn't happy with that at first. Now I have looked at it. I have looked at it over time, and I look back at my life, I guess, because I did go south. I am proud to say I graduated. I went to my grade one to 13 here in the Northwest Territories, and then, I went south for nine years to school. Part of that was in Calgary, but the other part was in

Butte, Montana, which is a small place. I went and we lived there for four years, and the Minister of education was part of that journey. It was interesting. There were a lot of people from Canada going there, people that I actually worked with, and that is why I am encouraging you to go there.

When we say that this may force our residents or our children or the young people to be on the outside looking in, but at least they get to look, and they can see what is possible. That is what we have to give them. We have to give them hope. The toughest part of school is getting in. Once you are in there, it is not that bad. We have to give them that hope. It has to come sooner or later, and it may as well be us that start it, or at least try to get close to completion. I think we are headed in the right direction. While we are probably going to be squabbling over head office. Who gets a new camp, possibly, and all that? I think we are probably going to see Fort Smith continue to be the focal centre with respect to administration and head offices and that. I am just hoping what we do is we don't hire people, "Okay. You are in charge of it, but you get to live in Yellowknife." We don't need that. We need people who are willing to be on the ground where the students are because that is what it is about. If you are not connecting with the students and you are in charge, there's a problem with that.

There is a lot of work to be done. We have been taking a bit of heat on it. At the end of the day, it is a priority of this Assembly. It is your guys' mandate. You guys pick the team that you want to lead it, and we have got to back you on it, and that is all there is to it. I guess there is no question. Just a comment. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Are there any further questions to "Create a polytechnic university"? Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. One of the university question, Aurora College, all those create aspirations for the young at heart, young kids in the communities, some place they can go to in the North, some place close to home. I assume those are aspirations that they would have. I don't want to cut those aspirations off. It is probably inevitable that this will happen, but it may happen further down the road than we expect. There are factors that contribute to that. We heard from the Premier before that the federal government funds infrastructure, but they do not fund programming. With us being in a deficit mode and constantly raising our debt limit, are we going to be able to afford it? To staff it and to run the programs and to be associated with other recognized universities, that is going to cost a lot of money. Do we have the money for that?

Another big factor too, as my colleague from Monfwi alluded to, is the education levels in our small communities. I think we have got the majority of them on the outside here that don't have those education levels as in par with the rest of Canada. We have got probably a majority that through social passing up to grade 12, but anywhere from grades seven, eight, and nine. There are a lot of them that are up there. They are smart cookies out there. What is missing from the education in our small communities is the required sciences and the math because we don't have matriculation programs in the academic programming in our communities. We don't have chemistry. We don't have physics. We don't have biology. They are saying it is in distance learning but who actually is monitoring that? Where is the evaluation on that? I am a really big fan of evaluations to see if a program is actually working, and seeing who is taking advantage of it, and whether it is working for those people.

There is a majority out there who are going to aspire to hit any university. We have to fix that. That is what I have been harping on since day one when I got here back in October because it is just what it is. We are critically low levels in relation to the Yukon College, to a university, I don't believe they have a situation as the NWT because NWT, we have three large regional centres. One is Yellowknife. Two large regional centres that run Aurora College programming. That programming and those centres are very important to the two outlying communities, besides Yellowknife, because it is creating employment in those centres. Families have moved there. They have got a legacy; they have been living there forever. They are running hockey programs. They are running sports programs. These are all the educators who we brought in to the outlying communities to run the colleges. This is really concerning, when we are going to centralize the university in one place, because you have to think about the impacts that we are going to be leaving. We are setting up these communities to become ghost towns. It is already happening right now. I will tell you why it is happening right now. It is because the GNWT in the past has allowed to degradate the programming that was in the college and with the housing. I have seen that myself in Fort Smith. They weren't up-keeping or advancing or getting more programming moving North, concentrating on those centres and making them better places. We lost programming; we lost social services in those communities. I don't think they have a teacher education program there anymore. There could have been a lot more.

When I went there to continue my upgrading or whatever, I just say where is everybody? Everybody went south. They want to go south. Who doesn't want to go to school in Grand Prairie and Edmonton? That is what was happening. We were

losing our own students because of not following our own policies with the GNWT for education funding, because some of the students were not allowed to fund their families in the communities to go to school in another community, where there are no student residences. They want to take their kids there because they have better education in the larger centres. We are not funding them for that, right in the territories. What we are doing is we are funding students to go take upgrading down South. That just doesn't make sense. We are not following any of our policies. That is what I have been watching from the outside for quite some time. You have to really think of that, what we are doing to the outside centres when we are going to make these decisions. I am not comfortable doing that, myself.

I did touch upon the programming and the funding that is all required, but I think we have to be cautious, throw caution to the wind, here, as we move forward. We can keep doing our studies and everything; we have to keep battling each other, saying, "No, no, no to this. We don't want it here. We want it over there." We have to join together for the future of the children of the Northwest Territories, but how we get there is a task in itself, and I would like to throw that caution to the wind for all to consider. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. I will give it to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment to respond.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. There was a lot in that eight minutes there, so I will respond to what I can. The Northern Distance Learning, the Member mentioned evaluations. We just had an Office of the Auditor General of Canada report that evaluated that program; they said it is great. We just had our five-year report on ERI; there are so many acronyms, I can never recall the name when I need to, but that showed success. I have testimonials from students, so that program is doing well. We are keeping an eye on it, and it is one of the bright spots when it comes to education.

The Member said we are going to turn the outlying communities, the ones outside of Yellowknife, into ghost towns. I don't know what the Member has planned, but I don't want any part of that. I am not turning Inuvik or Fort Smith into a ghost town. No one is centralizing a university in Yellowknife. There is no centralization of a university happening. The polytechnic university will not be centralized in Yellowknife. We are not creating a University of Yellowknife. I don't know how many more times, how many different ways I can say this.

We have a beautiful campus in Fort Smith. We are not made of money. We are not going to bulldoze a beautiful campus that has amazing facilities. We are going to utilize them. If it is the biggest campus,

it is probably going to have the most students. We need infrastructure in Yellowknife, there is no doubt about it. I don't know if anyone paid attention to what happened in the last Assembly; I am not about centralization. I relate with MLA Martselos. I am about the regions. I am about the entire territory. We can't centralize; we are not going to centralize. We are not creating ghost towns. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Time has come, so are there any further questions on "Create a polytechnic university"? Seeing no further questions, committee, do you agree that we have concluded consideration of Tabled Document 12-19(2), 2019-2023 Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Premier, and our thanks to the witness, Mr. Goldney, for appearing before us. Sergeant-at-Arms, will you please escort the witness from the Chamber? What is the will of committee? Mr. Norn.

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

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

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

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

Report of Committee of the Whole

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

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The motion is on the floor. Do we have a seconder? Member for Frame Lake. Item 23, third reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

Third Reading of Bills

BILL 2:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 4, 2019-
2020

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Sahtu, that Bill 2, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2019-2020, be read for the third time. Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded vote, please. Thank you.

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

RECORDED VOTE

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

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please rise. All those abstaining, please rise. Those in favour, 16; zero opposed; zero abstentions. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Friday, February 28, 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. Replies to the Budget Address (Day 4 of 7)
7. Acknowledgements
8. Oral Questions

9. Written Questions
10. Returns to Written Questions
11. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
12. Petitions
13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
14. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
15. Tabling of Documents
16. Notices of Motion
17. Motions
18. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
19. First Reading of Bills
20. Second Reading of Bills
21. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates 2020-2021
 - Tabled Document 43-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. This House stands adjourned until Friday, February 28, 2020, at 10:00 a.m. Thank you.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:51 p.m.