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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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(Monfwi)

Ms. Frieda Martselos

(Thebacha)

Ms. Katrina Nokleby

(Great Slave)

Mr. Steve Norn

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(Frame Lake)

Ms. Lesa Semmler

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(Hay River South)

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Minister of Education, Culture & Employment
Minister of Justice

Hon. Shane Thompson

(Nahendeh)
Minister of Environment and Natural Resources
Minister of Lands
Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission

Hon. Caroline Wawzonek

(Yellowknife South)
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Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, including responsibility for the Business Development and Investment Corporation
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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Friday, March 12, 2021****Members Present**

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

The House met at 10:01 a.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.): Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ministers' Statements

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 141-19(2):
IMPROVEMENTS TO DRIVER AND VEHICLE
SERVICES**

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories understands how important it is for residents to have reliable and efficient access to driver and vehicle services. For this reason, we are committed to delivering and improving these services for the public, even during a global pandemic. I would like to thank the employees working at driver and vehicle offices across the territory, including our regional contractors and online support staff.

The GNWT knows that our residents need to have access to services. Because of the pandemic, Driver and Motor Vehicle office, or DMV, have had to change how they operate. To ensure the safety of our staff and the public, our offices were closed from March to July, 2020. DMV employees and contractors had to quickly adapt to accommodate the public by phone and email. Once reopened to the public, our offices had to implement new health and safety measures, which impacted capacity in waiting areas.

Despite these challenges, in the past year, our government has provided almost 63,000 in-person service requests and over 68,000 online service transactions across the territory. These services included issuing new driver's licence and general identification cards, providing residents with driver abstracts, updating and renewing existing licences, and registering vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, we do recognize we need to improve further. We have heard some concerns, particularly from Yellowknife residents around the booking

process for in-person visits to our issuing office. We value feedback from the public and are always looking at ways to improve our customer service delivery. That is why the Yellowknife DMV office is distributing anonymous exit surveys to clients, asking them to share their thoughts around the GNWT's booking process. These surveys will help guide decision-making around client service processes in the future.

On the digital side of things, work is underway to improve the driver and vehicle website, also known as iDMV. The iDMV provides residents with several online services, such as renewing a driver's licence or vehicle registration. While this website has been very useful for residents, we have also heard from many people about how challenging it can be to use at times. We hear and value your feedback. We are committed to doing better. Clients can expect an improved, more user-friendly iDMV web experience in the coming months.

Mr. Speaker, one of our core functions are issuing driver's licenses and general identification cards. This past year, we have made some exciting upgrades to these documents. The new cards offer more security features, meaning they are more difficult to alter or replicate, keep unlicensed and suspended drivers off the road so that we can protect our residents from fraud. We also introduced facial recognition technology. Images for driver's licences and general identification cards that are taken at driver and vehicle offices will be used for a facial recognition system. This will provide residents with greater protection from identity theft and make it harder to obtain a driver's license when banned in driving in another jurisdiction.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories will continue to prioritize resident safety, while delivering driver and vehicle services to residents across the territory. We will continue to listen to our clients' feedback so we can improve on the delivery of these important services. Quyanainni, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Honourable Premier.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 142-19(2):
INTERGOVERNMENTAL COUNCIL LEGISLATIVE
DEVELOPMENT PROTOCOL

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Mr. Speaker, a fundamental part of our success as a government, and the future prosperity of our territory, depends on a productive and collaborative partnership with Indigenous governments. We must foster constructive and respectful relationships with our Indigenous leaders and, to seek ways to advance reconciliation, recognize and affirm Indigenous rights and support expanded program and service delivery.

It gives me great pleasure to update Members of the 19th Legislative Assembly on the Intergovernmental Council's recent adoption of the legislative development protocol for lands and resources legislation. In 2014, the Government of the Northwest Territories committed to working collaboratively with our devolution partners to review and develop any proposed changes, including legislative changes, to our land and resource management systems. The Northwest Territories Intergovernmental Agreement on Lands and Resource Management is an important part of this commitment, and our work through the Intergovernmental Council shows how we can work together while also recognizing the rights, jurisdiction, and authority of each individual council member.

Mr. Speaker, the legislative development protocol was adopted by the Intergovernmental Council on December 2, 2020, and provides for the collaborative development of lands and resource legislation. Consistent with the Northwest Territories Intergovernmental Agreement on Lands and Resources Management, the protocol respects the jurisdictions and authorities of Indigenous governments and the Government of the Northwest Territories and preserves the important role of the elected leaders while also providing a mechanism for collaboration and consensus-building. The protocol is the first agreement of its kind in Canada and supports the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by respecting, consulting, and collaborating with Indigenous governments on land and resource management.

The Intergovernmental Council's shared commitment to work together has been a hallmark of the GNWT approach to the devolution of land and resource management in 2014. The protocol is a step toward realizing the mutual promises we made with our devolution partners. The protocol also supports this governments ongoing efforts to collaborate with Indigenous governments to meet mandate priorities, including the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of

Indigenous Peoples. The protocol has already attracted positive attention from other parts of Canada and reinforces this government's reputation as a nationwide leader in this area.

Make no mistake, there will be times when unanimous agreement cannot be reached at the Intergovernmental Council. The protocol recognizes that unanimous support is not required and decisions that balance different interests will still be required as the Government of the Northwest Territories' legislation is developed. Further, to help promote harmonization and collaboration, the protocol provides a mechanism for notification of Indigenous governments' own legislation regarding lands and resources.

I would like to express my gratitude to my colleagues on the Intergovernmental Council for their commitment and collaborative spirit and congratulate them all by recognizing each member and their officials for this historic undertaking. The members of the Intergovernmental Council, along with the Government of the Northwest Territories, include:

- Acho Dene Koe First Nation;
- Deninu Kue First Nation;
- Gwich'in Tribal Council;
- Inuvialuit Regional Corporation;
- K'atlodeeche First Nation;
- Northwest Territory Metis Nation;
- Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated;
- Salt River First Nation; and
- the Tlicho Government.

The promise of devolution included a commitment to work collaboratively as governments on the management of lands and resources in the Northwest Territories. The members of the Intergovernmental Council are delivering on this promise.

The protocol will result in stronger and more effective land and resource management legislation. It will also better position the GNWT to collaborate on any new legislative authority it obtains through ongoing discussions to bring elements of the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act home to the Northwest Territories.

For Indigenous governments that are not yet members of the Intergovernmental Council, we will continue to consult and engage, to ensure that they also have an opportunity to provide input on the

development of lands and resources legislation. I will also continue to invite Indigenous governments not yet partners in devolution to join and work directly through the Intergovernmental Council.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working together with the Intergovernmental Council to make decisions for the responsible and sustainable management of lands, waters, and natural resources of the Northwest Territories for the benefit of current and future generations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Ministers' statements. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 143-19(2):
RESPECTFUL CARIBOU HUNTING

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Caribou have sustained generations of Northerners across the Northwest Territories. They are deeply tied to the NWT's society and culture. Communities have always relied on them for food, hides, and traditional practices, but today, some herds have seen major declines. They continue to face challenges, including climate change, habitat change, predators, and human activity. Illegal and disrespectful hunting practices are also real concerns.

Our government continues to work with Indigenous governments and organizations, and other co-management partners, to put rules in place to protect the herds and support recovery and has done so for decades. We continue to work with our partners to support people in following traditional harvesting practices and showing respect for the caribou. But still, there is a problem.

We see it on the ground and from the air, as officers patrol for illegal hunting, wastage, and garbage left on the land; we hear it from Indigenous governments and organizations, when they tell us if traditional practices are being broken by people looking to sell harvested caribou for profit, which is also against the Wildlife Act; and we feel it when fellow hunters share stories and images of wounded animals left unharvested and suffering by others.

Mr. Speaker, while most hunters do things the right way, we continue to see others who haven't this year. We have documented more than 50 instances of illegal hunting in the no-harvest zone to protect the Bathurst herd, and many cases of meat wastage across the winter road this season. That is much higher than this point last year. These actions have real consequences, and I do not just mean charges. Every illegally hunted animal hurts efforts towards recovery of the Bathurst herd. Every piece of meat wasted means families and communities do

not get the most out of the harvest. Every time people take more than they need, they put the herd at risk and set back shared efforts towards recovery.

Mr. Speaker, when I talk to elders and leaders, there is a real fear that these practices are pushing us towards a future no one wants to see: one where caribou aren't there; one where their children do not get to bring meat home for their kids. Our government is listening. We are working with Indigenous governments and organizations. We are taking action as partners so future generations will be able to harvest. We have increased the enforcement presence along the winter road by truck, snowmobile, and helicopter. We are looking out for illegal meat sales online and in our communities. We are asking people to follow the law and laying charges against those who do not.

We are supporting our wolf harvesters and the NWT traditional economy to help reduce the impact wolves have on our caribou herds, and we are working with co-management partners to continuously improve our wolf management efforts. We are working with governments and organizations spanning the NWT, Nunavut, and two provinces on management plans with real action to move threatened caribou herds towards recovery. We are investing in programs to increase harvesting knowledge across our territory, like hunter education, take a family trapping, and site-in-your-rifle events. We are targeting our communication and outreach to change behaviours, bringing voices together from our communities, elders, and leaders to join the effort.

Mr. Speaker, regulations and plans alone aren't going to get us to recovery. It also comes down to individuals making good decisions. Please, if you are exercising your right to hunt or harvest, remember:

- Do not harvest any caribou where you aren't allowed to, including the mobile zone;
- Use everything from the animals you harvest;
- Take bulls to protect future generations of the herd;
- Harvest only what you need; and
- Respect the land and water while you are out there.

Make these choices today so future generations can enjoy the harvest. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 144-19(2):
ROLLING – ACTION! NWT FILM AND MEDIA

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, while 2020 was a very different year for film and media in the Northwest Territories, we have continued to work behind the scenes to ensure we are supporting the sector so they are ready to welcome new opportunities when border restrictions are eased.

As we all know, the pandemic has impacted economic and social sectors around the world. The Northwest Territories film and media sector was no exception. Several guest film companies postponed their productions as a result of border restrictions. Since that time, the Northwest Territories Film Commission has worked with stakeholders to look for innovative ways to support the industry with a focus on future development. For example, the film commission offered support through the territorial Creative Industries Economic Recovery Fund, providing \$341,873 for both film- and arts-related projects. It supported Western Arctic Moving Pictures to present a virtual film production script-to-screen training series delivered by established Northwest Territories film producers at the 13th annual virtual Yellowknife International Film Festival. Members from the Professional Media Association received complimentary festival passes to attend the virtual 2020 Banff Media Festival and Whistler Film Festival and Summit and were also supported to deliver a virtual screenwriting workshop to its members, led by a professional screenwriter based in Los Angeles. As well, the Film Rebate Program, begun in 2015, has committed approximately \$511,000 to 14 different productions, leveraging an additional \$5 million in funding into the NWT. To date, the total direct Northwest Territories spend is approximately \$5.5 million.

Supporting this sector is something that our government remains committed to, especially as we look to post-COVID-19 recovery. The film industry is an important driver of both economic activity and cultural development. According to the most recent 2019 report from the national Culture Satellite Account, film and associated activities contribute \$9.27 million to the Northwest Territories' gross domestic product, \$15.5 million to the Northwest Territories' economic output, and supports 58 jobs. Less tangibly but perhaps more important, home-grown films help tell and show stories of the land and people of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, while we will still face challenges associated with the pandemic for the foreseeable future, we are also preparing for the easing of border and travel restrictions. The first Northwest Territories film strategy, Take One, was focused on growth, for in-territory productions and creating

partnerships out of territory. Over the past 10 years, the film and media sector has grown substantially and is now in the position of leveraging partnerships toward greater projects and opportunities. Over the past year, the Let's Talk Film and Media campaign was launched to gather feedback on the next phase of film and media growth. We engaged community leaders, municipalities, and stakeholders across the North for their input.

The result is "Rolling, Action: The Next Five Years," the film and media sector strategy and action plan, currently being finalized for launch this spring. The focus to 2026 is continued growth with an emphasis on becoming nationally competitive and solidifying a sustainable industry in the Northwest Territories. The strategy and action plan will demonstrate our government's commitment to further develop the film and media sector, market and promote productions made in the NWT, attract commercial productions from outside the NWT, and build the capacity of the local industry and organizations. This is only a teaser. An announcement on the first initiative from the new strategy, will be made this spring.

Mr. Speaker, as we look to what we will do to support this sector, it is also important to recognize the achievements that have been made to this point. Last evening was a celebration marking the 10th formal year of the Northwest Territories film and media sector. The NWT Film Commission hosted what I note was a COVID-directive-compliant event with sector stakeholders from across the territory. To commemorate 10 years of film in the Northwest Territories, milestone awards were presented to some of the groups and partners that have helped to grow the film and media sector. Representatives from the Inuvialuit Communications Society, the Native Communications Society, the Northwest Territories Professional Media Association, Western Arctic Moving Pictures, and the Dead North Film Festival accepted awards for their contributions to northern film and media.

Of special note, I will highlight the work of Artless Collective's Pablo Saravanja and Jay Bulckaert on the Dead North Film Festival. Since 2012, this homegrown festival has encouraged hundreds of film teams of all ages and experience to participate. Over the last nine years, more than 220 films were produced and showcased at the festival. Some went beyond, to other festivals and screenings, with others leading to feature projects or earning a screen in world-renowned film festivals. The Northwest Territories Film Commission in the Department of Industry, Tourism, and Investment has been a supporter and sponsor of the festival from its outset. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: One of the key pieces of Dead North has been the industry training and workshops afforded to participants, at which the writers and producers of films received tips and feedback from more experienced professionals in the industry. This component of the festival marks a true investment in not only the film and media sector but in the people working to expand and grow NWT film into a significant contributor of the northern economy. Congratulations to all of last night's recipients. Thank you for your dedication to the growing film and media sector in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories recognizes the economic and cultural benefits of developing the Northwest Territories film and media sector by supporting local capacity building, promoting made-in-the-NWT film projects, and attracting commercial productions from outside the NWT. These actions contribute to the mandate commitment of increasing economic diversification by supporting growth in non-extractive sectors and setting regional diversification targets. ITI continues to promote investments and unique opportunities in the film and media sector, recognizing not only the benefits it generates across other sectors of the Northwest Territories economy but the importance of continuing to celebrate industry and partner achievements over the next 10 years. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Great Slave.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON RAINBOW COALITION

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rainbow: a spectrum; all the colours in the universe. Coalition: a group of people joined together for a common purpose. When you put these two words together, I can't think of a more fitting name for the amazing non-profit organization I want to highlight today, the Rainbow Coalition of Yellowknife. The Rainbow Coalition is an outreach organization based in Yellowknife, dedicated to creating a safer space in the Northwest Territories for 2SLGBTQQIPAA+ youth, which stands for two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-plus, queer, questioning, intersex, pansexual, asexual, and agender persons, and also includes non-binary, genderfluid, genderqueer, and demisexual.

2SLGBTQQIPAA+ students experience more mental health issues, a higher risk of suicide, and higher drop-out rates than hetero-cis-gender

students. The coalition's mission is to raise awareness about issues and identities; to help these youth build confidence; to support their parents and families in accepting, understanding, and loving them; to provide advice and support to community agencies and organizations about relevant issues; to advocate for a safer and more equitable territory for these youth; and, in addition to all of this hard work, they operate a youth centre in Yellowknife.

The coalition offers programming and training for all people. However, they do have a particular focus on youth. Programming includes topics such as health concerns, examining and processing experiences, sexual health, and self-identity. All programming is offered free of charge, and the Rainbow Coalition has an event calendar full of activities. In the way of community resources, they offer workshops and training in inclusive workspaces and 2SLGBTQQIPAA+ awareness. At the Rainbow Youth Centre, programming offered includes literature and peer-support appointments as well as mentorship, art, and networking opportunities.

In March of 2017 the coalition held the first NWT Rainbow Youth Conference, and feedback from the proceedings led to the development of guidelines. This resulted in inclusive dress codes, literature on how to support a student-led gay-straight alliance, and a safe social space for kids to gather and discuss relevant issues for them. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have no questions today. It also includes guidelines for working with students who have gender-fluid identities and resulted in several collaborative art projects expressing a message of inclusiveness. Like many non-governmental agencies in the Northwest Territories, the Rainbow Coalition is doing amazing work to reach out to marginalized students who may be falling through the cracks of governmental services. Recently, their work was recognized through a donation from Women and Gender Equality Canada as one of 76 organizations receiving funding to further the amazing work they do. The coalition will be using this money to expand their work outside the capital and into all 33 communities in the NWT, and I can't wait to support them in that endeavour and thank them wholeheartedly for the work they do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Memberships. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

MS. SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, March is National Social Worker Month, and I would like to thank the social workers in the NWT for the work that they do. I would also like to encourage the social workers in our territory to continue to look at our families under the lens of reconciliation and remind the non-Indigenous social workers who have not grown up in the NWT that our families have been under attack since contact.

The impact of what residential schools did on families, some never even got to live with their families from the ages of five to eighteen. This is evident on their families now as they struggle with parenting and addictions from the trauma that they experienced. Please show compassion for our Indigenous mothers and fathers who, just because they are Indigenous, are in constant fear of losing their children. Some are not even aware that the way that they are living is unacceptable because it's normal and the reality of how they grew up.

Mr. Speaker, the stats are almost 100 percent of children in care are Indigenous in the Northwest Territories, and this saddens me. Our social work program in the NWT was stopped and put under review. This was very concerning as it would decrease the amount of local and Indigenous social workers being trained in the NWT under an Aboriginal lens. I hope that this program will resume with a focus on prevention and not intervention. The more we focus on prevention, the less intervention we will have to do. Then, Mr. Speaker, we can look to a future with less broken families. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know school attendance across our territory and especially small communities is lacking, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Education has talked about: missing just one day means a student has missed over two years of school before he hits grade 12. The pandemic has made it even more challenging as a shift to online learning challenges parents, teachers, students around the country. We are fortunate that students are still learning in our classrooms and the territory. I am worried about school attendances is low, and our education has to be made a priority for families across our territory in our small communities.

There are many reasons why some parents may not put a lot of importance to schooling. The impacts on residential schools is a big one because it's over three or four generations. Mr. Speaker, I'm glad those days are over and those days are behind us. Education is now focusing on keeping kids in the communities with their families and giving them the skills that they need to succeed in today's world.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the Minister is willing to come visit the communities and talk of the importance of staying in school, and meet with the local DEA and community leadership, and support and encourage them in regards to keeping kids in school, and making a plan for the community to -- such as pool trips or something for kids to look forward to coming to school. The community of Tuktoyaktuk, I know that they give food hampers out to 90 percent attendance and over, so something like that should be really looked at and promoted across our territory. It's really needed, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I want to thank our teachers, our staff, and our local DEAs, and our local community leadership for making our students able to attend school in our local communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Member for Deh Cho.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES POWER
CORPORATION STRATEGIC PLAN

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The Northwest Territories Power Corporation was established in 1988 and is the largest supplier of electricity in the Northwest Territories. According to the 2019-2020 annual report, they were to ensure continued reliability of electricity systems and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Their mission statement is to generate, transmit, and distribute clean, reliable, and affordable energy to the residents of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, they also note having 26 diesel plants. NTPC announced new projects to include a refurbishment of the Taltson hydro-electric facility, construction of a new liquefied natural gas, or LNG, generating plant at Fort Simpson, and a new diesel plant in Lutselk'e. Fuel use in 2019 amounted to \$30 million. In 2020, this amount increased to \$31 million. Including the new facilities coming on line, we can see further increases in fuel usage, whether they be diesel or LNG. It makes one scratch their head and wonder how NTPC will ever meet the greenhouse gas emissions targets. After all, when the price of diesel goes up, so too do the power rates. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF INDIGENOUS
LEADERS

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I would like to acknowledge all of the Indigenous leaders across the NWT, and that includes all First Nations, Metis, and Inuit leaders within all the communities of the regions of the territory.

Mr. Speaker, as a former chief, I know very well all the challenges that being an Indigenous leader comes with. I know the level of work and stress that comes with the job. I also know how difficult a decision is to put your name forward as chief, and being a former chief, I consider most of the Indigenous leaders of the NWT as friends and former colleagues of mine. As most people probably know by now, I hold the Indigenous file, and all the concerns of Indigenous people very close to my heart. As a Dene leader, I know the importance of solidarity and standing up for one another, and I strive to do the best I can in my current role as MLA, just as I did as chief. It's important that we look out for one another and ensure that we all prosper together. That is the core philosophy and value within Aboriginal communities.

Mr. Speaker, I thank all the Indigenous leaders for the work they do for their communities. I would like to especially thank Dave Poitras, the current chief of the Salt River First Nation, as well as Allan Heron, the president of the Metis Council of Fort Smith. I have a good working relationship with all local Indigenous leadership of Fort Smith, and I will always do all that I can to fight for and stand up for the needs as their representative in the Legislative Assembly. I truly appreciate all the time, energy, and work that all Indigenous leaders dedicate to improving their communities. I hope our government will continue to foster healthy relationships with all Indigenous governments and communities across the NWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
HOUSE CALLS IN COMMUNITIES AND SHOCK
TRAUMA AIR RESCUE SERVICE (STARS)

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Over the last couple of weeks and last couple of days, we discussed the Health and Social Services practices which prevents staff from attending emergency

calls outside their health centres. Specifically, this directive was sent to all community health centre clinic services in the Territories on November 6, 2019. Since that date, if one were in medical distress, it made clear to our residents in the small communities without EMS services, they would have to be brought to the health centre by the RCMP, fire services, or a friend.

Mr. Speaker, this is still unacceptable in my eyes, and it has come to my attention that house calls have started in one of my communities in my riding. In seeing that, I firmly believe that this policy, this directive, can be easily revisited and re-worded as such, that NTHSSA staff can make discretionary calls to assist those in distress outside of our health centres. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I think that this definitely is a matter where one department can meet another department again, in this case, MACA, to help close this gap further, and we've discussed this a little bit already. The end goal here is to have our volunteer firefighters, or any volunteers in the communities, immediately trained up in first responder training or first aid training and have their training upgraded or renewed. I am hoping that, by the end of all this, we can properly serve our residents better.

Saying that, Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to see that the Department of Health and Social Services has made strides in other areas, like mental health. They made that recent announcement where they are reinstating mental health first aid. I am really hoping that they can make similar strides to help close this gap for the quality of health services overall.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak a little bit about the STARS program. That's the Shock Trauma Air Rescue Service that they have in Alberta in certain communities. This is a program that is a partnership -- again, keyword: partnership -- approach using both private and public funds. It allows for air ambulance services for places like Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer, and Grand Prairie. I think, ideally, we could have a deal where we would see service like this in the territories, but it's very expensive to put together. Just to make a quick note, again, STARS is a society. It's an NGO. They gather funds, and they work really hard with their community to get this service up and running. I would love to have that up here in the North.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, a constituent shared some images about a job description for a community health nurse in Fort Resolution. In the job description, it was highlighted, a section that reads, "The CHN must have the ability to provide emergency care and treatment in the position and is required to perform transfer medical functions beyond normal hospital training." Mr. Speaker, I

seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Marsi cho, colleagues. In this policy, it also states that nurses or NTHSSA staff must have the ability to legally operate a motor vehicle in order to drive to and from clients' homes. In reading that, this job description is contradictory to the policy in my statement earlier. What are the true duties of our staff in our small communities? I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services at the appropriate time. Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EXTENDED CARE BEDS

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to talk about seniors and, more specifically, to those seniors requiring care. I was pleased to hear the Minister of health commit to having "seniors age in place with dignity as loved and valued members of our communities." Currently, our extended care facilities are becoming a place to house parents of southerners. This is taking away beds from our Indigenous and northern seniors who are then forced to live in substandard accommodation with limited care. We must revisit the residency requirement if we are planning to revise the number of extended care beds required. Furthermore, the department better be prepared to defend those numbers based, not only on sound and relevant data, but on real community needs.

Mr. Speaker, I was initially focused on the jobs that may be lost if Hay River loses some of the 48 beds it was promised. I almost lost sight of what was important. It is not about jobs as much as it is about quality of life for seniors. I was reminded of this by my son who reflected on his grandmother, my mother, who spent her last years in an extended care facility. He reminded me she would have preferred to be at home. If we focus on quality of life and providing support to those who are able to want to age at home, then that is where this government must provide that support.

Some will be up in arms due to the fact that fewer long-term beds may be realized in some communities. However, if we support seniors to age at home, then we will see an increase of homecare jobs. If we expect seniors to live out their final years as they wish, then we must provide the supports, and if it requires increased homecare staffing, then that is what we must do.

Mr. Speaker, the seniors in these facilities or those remaining in their homes need social interaction. They need to be physically active; they need to feel like they can still contribute; they need to be shown they matter; and they need to know they are loved. This is not about infrastructure for a community. This is not about jobs just because. It is about taking care of those who have taken care of us over the years. If this requires a shift in our thinking, then that shift is welcomed by me, but let's be clear. I and the residents of Hay River are prepared to fight for the 48 beds proposed for Hay River. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON POLYTECHNIC SCIENCE PROGRAM

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we look to build more homes in the North, and the GNWT's Best Building Practices become more complex, we will become more beholden to the building sciences. It's not news that the way we build in the NWT requires more effort, more time, and significantly more consideration, not to mention cost, Mr. Speaker. However, if we decide to skip any steps, the cost is borne by our residents for decades. Put simply, if we build buildings not designed for our climate, it costs us more in the long run. Our infrastructure is aging, and we need people to rebuild it.

Beyond the labour needed to construct new facilities and homes, we also need people to design them. Many of our buildings in the NWT are just not holding up to our northern climate anymore. They're leaky and expensive to maintain. This is a well-known problem, and the \$60 million utility bill this government gets every year doesn't let us forget, not to mention that the \$600 million deferred maintenance deficit lets us never forget the importance of good infrastructure the first time.

If we are going to build new infrastructure with a life span of at least 40 years, northern people should be designing it who know our climate. There is no question that jobs in the building sciences will exist in five or 20 years. It is an industry that is seeing growth as more people understand the value in green building technologies. We have included skill trades and technology in one of our areas of specialization for the northern polytech university, and to date, the words I have seen are saying the right things. We are still a long way away from actually increasing enrolment and graduating people ready to design the next generation of northern buildings.

Mr. Speaker, I am not asking for a full-fledged engineering or architectural program. A two-year technical program is probably more our capability, but it needs to be exciting enough to attract people from across Canada and the world. The North has a very specific climate, which is ideal for learning how to test the extremes of building science. There is increased interest in this area every day across the circumpolar world. Green building programs are slowly cropping up all around Canada. Northern building technique courses are appearing in universities across the world, but I want to make sure that we capture this momentum and lead the trend. I will have questions for the Minister of ECE about whether we can see the development of a building science program as key to the new polytechnic. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FUTURE OF TOURISM

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. In 2019, ITI announced its intention to develop a new five-year tourism strategy. Then COVID-19 struck, and the tourism industry was turned upside down. The shockwave is shown in the difference between stakeholder consultation reports produced for the periods during December 2019 and then for May-June 2020. In the earlier report, tourism was then a thriving sector, but the May-June 2020 report was really a cry for help during the first wave of this pandemic.

In the immediate term, easing COVID-19 influenced travel restrictions and self-isolation requirements were considered to be the most pressing issues faced by the NWT tourism industry. When asked to look five years ahead, individuals highlighted the need to re-establish the international market by building consumer confidence that it's safe to travel in the NWT post-pandemic. Asked where our future strengths lay, almost all tourism operators said Indigenous cultural tourism gives us the greatest competitive edge and identified a strong focus on marketing as essential for recovery. When asked what areas do you think ITI should focus on to help the tourism industry recover in the next five years, participants said creating more Indigenous products and services, more marketing campaigns, and helping business develop new products and services.

Finally, participants were asked to rate the importance of future actions. The top four areas were: communicating with community residents to gain more support for tourism; investing in product development; providing more research and data to stakeholders to support data-driven decisions; and

engaging with operators and park visitors through enhanced communications and marketing activities.

I will have questions for the Minister of ITI on how we are going to carry the work mentioned in the surveys into a new tourism strategy and whether we have the resources to support this vital part of our economy. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PRIVATE BUSINESSES

MS. CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, it has been nearly one year of COVID-19 economic restrictions in the territory. Over the past year, the NWT's unemployment rate remains the lowest among all Canadian jurisdictions; however, a significant amount of our workforce growth was due to the growth of the public service.

Mr. Speaker, I am thankful that the NWT was able to grow at a time when many around the world were losing jobs, homes, and loved ones, but the fact is growth of the public sector alone is not an indicator of a healthy economic environment, and I remain concerned about the future projection of our territorial economy. The GNWT depends on a vibrant private sector. We need private business owners to flourish and every opportunity between the corporate world down to home-based small businesses to serve our GNWT operations. It is a symbiotic relationship. The government needs businesses to provide services, and the health of the private sector is largely affected by the GNWT's ability to spend locally. Without a healthy northern private sector, we can expect residents to move south to find a home base with a lower cost of living, where they will continue to compete for the same northern contracts with less overhead. This kind of exodus will further reduce our federal transfer payments, the very payments that fund our government operations.

The best job security for a robust public service is a thriving business sector, and every department has the potential to ensure northern businesses are prioritized over southern ones. Every department has the onus to look for ways to support business creation and business opportunity in the North. Without a growing private sector, Mr. Speaker, our now-inflated public service will eventually need to shrink. March is the busiest contracting month in many departments, where targeted tenders head out in an effort to spend remaining department budgets. We can deny it happens, but we all know it does. As you look to spend your remaining budgets, I implore public servants to exclusively support northern businesses. You have the control to support northern and buy local. You have the power to grow our entrepreneurs and the private sector that supports our children's sports teams,

and you have the power to support your own job security. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
EULOGY FOR DR. DAVID SCHINDLER

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize the important work of Dr. David Schindler, who was an influential contributor to the NWT water policies. On March 4th, Dr. Schindler passed away at the age of 80. He was the leading Canadian water scientist who was instrumental in building our underlying knowledge of the effects that acid rain, climate change, long-range atmospheric transport of contaminants, and oil sands have on Canadian lakes and rivers. Dr. Schindler had a keen respect for the NWT. In a 2015 Globe and Mail article he wrote that "the water sources of the Northwest Territories make it one of the most important places in the world."

Dr. Schindler was an important part of the history of water science and policy in the NWT. He was a science advocate on the Northern River Basins Study, an expert witness during the review of the first diamond mine in the NWT, and twice a panel member for the Rosenberg International Forum that provided water policy advice to the Government of the Northwest Territories. He supported the development of the NWT water strategy and advised on the development of bilateral water management agreements with other Mackenzie River basin jurisdictions.

Dr. Schindler spent time in the North as both a scientist and a dog musher. He was a strong advocate for the inclusion of local and traditional knowledge in monitoring, research, and decision-making long before others. In the same 2015 Globe and Mail article, he wrote that many Indigenous people of the North talk about the water as the "beating heart of our land" and encouraged us all to think that way and work together to ensure that it beats for generations to come.

I want to express my sincere condolences to the family, friends, and colleagues of Dr. David Schindler, and on behalf of ENR, I would like to thank Dr. Schindler for his research on freshwater resources and advocacy for Indigenous people. It is my sincere hope that his legacy will also continue for generations to come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nahendeh. Are thoughts and prayers are with the family at this time. Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Minister of Health and Social Services.

Returns to Oral Questions

QUESTION 651-19(2):
MEDEVAC SERVICES AND MEDICAL ESCORTS

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a Return to Oral Question asked by the Member for Nunakput on March 10, 2021, regarding medevac services and medical escorts. From January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2020, there were 305 air ambulance transports from the Beaufort-Delta; 68 percent were sent to Inuvik Hospital, 29 percent were sent to Stanton Hospital, and 3 percent went to Edmonton.

Escort data is not available. It is tracked by the air ambulance contractors. In general, non-patients are not permitted on the plane, but an escort may be allowed if the patient is under 19 or if interpretation services are required in-flight. However, the final decision to permit an escort on the plane rests with the crew to assess and then decide, with a focus on ensuring the care and safety of the patient and that the crew is able to deliver the necessary services.

The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services system has evolved to provide a broad range of medical services. The department and the health authorities are completing an NWT Physician Workforce Plan, which has four years of engagement and inquiry behind it. The workforce plan considers the needs of the system and balances resource availability, such as the cost of air ambulances, while working towards a solution under the following principles:

- Improve equity in access to physician services throughout the NWT;
- Achieve continuity between family physicians and patients within multidisciplinary teams to ensure that people have access to the right category of practitioner at the right time;
- Provide care as close to home as appropriate, including maximizing the use of virtual options when possible;
- Meet standards for quality of care and wait times; and
- Achieve sustainability.

I will share the details of the plan with all Members once a draft is finalized. At this time, the department, in collaboration with the authorities, is conducting an internal review of the medical travel programs escort policy and application. I will take into consideration the request to enhance the current policy to include escorts for all elders as part of this review. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. Member for Nunakput.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 668-19(2): SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, my Member's statement was on the lack of attendance in our small communities, so I would like to see if the Minister is willing to come up to my riding of Nunakput and go on like a tour, and meet with the local DEAs and our local leadership in regard to encouraging our staff and encouraging the teachers on doing a good job that they're doing but encouraging the parents to get their kids to school. That being said, I'm inviting the Minister up to Nunakput as soon as possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the Member for bringing this up. Attendance is really at the heart of learning. If you're not in school, you're not going to be learning, and so there are constant discussions at the local DEA level, the DEC level, and the DECE level about how we can make improvements. A lot of the time, there are things outside of the school, and that's the reason students aren't coming. There is a lot of effort being put into ensuring that schools are welcoming, safe, caring spaces where students want to go. There are a number of other things, as well, but I'll just answer the Member's question. I have a trip to Fort Smith coming up, I have a trip to the Sahtu, and after that, my next stop will be Nunakput. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 669-19(2): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES POWER CORPORATION STRATEGIC PLAN

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. NTPC has had its work cut out for them since its inception in 1988. Supplying power to a vast territory covering the large landmass with a small population sure has its challenges. Can the Minister elaborate on how NTPC expects to cut greenhouse gas emissions when they are increasing diesel generating plants on top of what they currently have? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Power Corporation.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I wish to thank the Member from Deh Cho for providing me with somewhat technical questions in advance so I would be able to answer the question that the Member is asking for. It's very appreciated. Renewables cannot be relied on to provide power when it is needed. NTPC must maintain enough diesel generation in each of the communities to ensure that lights stay on. That's very important. We also have a large number of diesel generators, and they do age and need to be replaced occasionally. Last week, Mr. Speaker, I did a statement on aging infrastructure, and we recognize that. When we do replace them, however, we use more efficient generators, which result in lower greenhouse gas emissions. Again, that's important, as well. Under our 2030 Energy Strategy, the GNWT has a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from diesel generation by 25 percent by 2023. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi to the Minister for that. The GNWT Infrastructure Department has an energy division that looks at alternate sources of energy. Perhaps they have information on biomass generating electricity. Can the Minister ensure NTPC collaborates with the energy division to come up with greenhouse gas emission-cutting alternative sources of generating electricity?

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: It just happens to be that I'm Minister of Infrastructure and Minister of NTPC, so of course, our departments are going to continue to work together. I do want to add that we have looked at a feasibility of biomass-based electricity generation recently for combined heat and power in Fort Simpson. It is technically challenging and also very expensive, and I do want to note that this study is freely available on our infrastructure website.

MR. BONNETROUGE: I note that NTPC has incorporated LNG use at the Inuvik power plant and the soon-to-be new electricity generating plant at Fort Simpson. Can the Minister elaborate as to why these have gone to LNG rather than diesel?

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Again, I just happen to be MLA from Inuvik, so this is right up my alley. Natural gas has been used for generation in Inuvik for a long time, for as long as I can remember, because there is a gas well that has allowed us to take right of the grant for power generation. We've been clearly happy with that. Recently, we have had to truck LNG to Inuvik due to loss of local supply. Even with the trucking cost, LNG is cheaper and cleaner option than diesel, and it also has fueled GHG emissions. For roads connected to

diesel communities of a certain size, NTPC and the GNWT look at the option to use LNG for power generation. We are currently looking at LNG for Fort Simpson as well as Tuktoyaktuk.

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

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I've been known to state that when the price of diesel goes up, so does my power bill. Can the Minister confirm or elaborate whether power rates go down when the price of diesel drops? Mahsi.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Part of your electricity rate is based on the average price of diesel which fluctuates over time. We recognize that. In general, if the cost of diesel drops over an extended period of time, the portion of electricity rate that includes diesel will go down but not immediately. If there is a large change in the cost of diesel, then NTPC may put in place what is called a rate rider that either adds or subtracts costs from your bill for a set period of time. Again, this doesn't happen immediately as it is best to average out the cost changes over time to be able to keep rates from going up or down too quickly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 670-19(2):

AMEND POLICY TO ALLOW MEDICAL STAFF
DISCRETION TO ATTEND MEDICAL CALLS

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going back to my Member's statement about Health and Social Services. My question for the Minister is: is the Minister willing to amend the policy I mentioned in my Member's statement and have it reworded for medical staff to have some discretion that allow their staff to leave the health centre to attend emergency calls? I recognize we have to keep in mind the health of the staff and also staffing numbers, as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This policy is a policy of the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority regarding their operations. The decision to amend that policy would be an operational decision on their part. The policies are reviewed regularly, and this policy is due for review again in June of 2022. Thank you.

MR. NORN: That was one of the things I wrote down just about five minutes ago. The next review is 2022, and for me, that is far too long. I don't want to lose any more residents anywhere in the territory

because of this really glaring service gap. I'll try to redirect this a little bit. Can the Minister have this reviewed sooner than 2022 and direct that NTHSSA to do this?

HON. JULIE GREEN: We're talking about the difference here between nurses and first responders. There is a difference. They work in different settings; they have different kinds of training; they have access to different kinds of equipment. It's not just a matter of saying to the nurse, "You're free to go and attend an emergency outside of the health centre." There is quite a bit more to it than that. I also want to note that nurses in the health centres are busy seeing people in the health centres. There would be a question then of how much further we can stretch the resources within the health centres if nurses are leaving. As I say, the idea of nurses filling in as first responders is not a good fit for the reasons I just spoke of.

MR. NORN: I think the end goal here was just to try, and this will lead into my next question, is to try to close that gap between MACA and Health and Social Services. Again, I'm going to say it again, partnerships here. My last question is: will the Minister commit to work with MACA to find a solution, perhaps creating a task force, to address this serious gap that we spoke of? Marsi cho,

HON. JULIE GREEN: I have previously and continued to acknowledge that there is a gap in services within some communities in terms of having a paramedic response in the appropriate vehicle and equipment to provide that response. I have committed to speaking with the Minister of MACA about this to see what kind of solution we can put in place. I intend to make good on that.

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

QUESTION 671-19(2):

PUBLIC SERVICE (PROCUREMENT)
SUPPORTING NORTHERN AND NORTHERN
BUSINESSES

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. I'm wondering if the Minister can please speak to what controls departments have at their disposal to ensure that GNWT dollars end up supporting northern businesses and northern workers from an industry perspective. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This actually touches on the Department of Finance, as well, insofar as Procurement Shared

Services does now reside there. All departments, when they have any sort of purchasing above \$25,000, do have to go through the public procurement process that resides within Procurement Shared Services. When they do so, it really is that the departments are of course required, when there are multiple bids, to go through local registered businesses as their first priority and then going through NWT bid registered businesses, then local businesses, then NWT businesses. Only then would they be looking to the non-Northwest Territories businesses. There are steps that are built into the process that all departments are expected to take and be aware of in addition to the fact that, even for those procurements that are under \$25,000, there is certainly a strong expectation that we are, of course, looking to support local businesses and Northwest Territories based businesses. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. CLEVELAND: There is a need for the GNWT to work interdepartmentally to identify where business opportunity is lacking and to use this information to strategically offer business supports in those areas. How does ITI work with departments to collect data on gaps in niche markets, where a large majority of GNWT contracts are going south? How do we educate ourselves as a government as to where money is leaving Northwest Territories markets and constantly going south?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I know that the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment certainly does capture the data about northern spends, jobs created, and looks at SEED investments and how that is utilized. For instance, again, tourism, I know there is information captured. However, I am hearing that the question is really one that is much more multi-departmental. I can speak to examples of that in ITI. Recently, we and ENR met to discuss exactly that, what can we do in some of our areas of shared interest to ensure that we are analyzing contracts that are not being awarded routinely to Northwest Territories businesses, so that work is happening. However, I think that to truly capture the point and to say that we are doing that as a government, I will have to commit to getting back to the Member after really taking that back to all colleagues so that it is truly a whole-of-government response.

MS. CLEVELAND: I really appreciate that and the Minister's intent to follow up on that. I think it's important for us to see where we are losing money and to see if there are markets that we are not filling in the Northwest Territories and to be able to properly communicate that to our business community. In that process of going back to departments, will the Minister also bring back information on how we are supporting businesses

to be educated about that? Because, sometimes, it's just a matter of a side-step for a business and one that people would probably love to be able to take advantage of to make sure we are keeping as many dollars from the GNWT in the North.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: There are a number of services offered to small- and medium-sized businesses in particular around business supports, which would then really include that kind of information: where are their opportunities, and what do they need to be doing to be more competitive on those opportunities? While I recognize, Mr. Speaker, that I am going to give an example that is maybe slightly beyond simply the idea of procurement, we are right now at ITI looking next month at bringing together a number of the different entities that provide business support services within ITI, economic development officers, BDIC, and some of the other economic development shops and entities and organizations, to make sure that, when we are doing that work to support the businesses of the North, we are doing it in a coordinated fashion, that we identify if there are areas where more supports are needed, such as what is being discussed and suggested here. As I say, that is actually lined up for next month, and this is a timely question to ensure that, when we do that, we are, in fact, answering that question for the Northwest Territories businesses.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My last question is one that we have slightly touched on before, and that is the timeline for completing the procurement review. We have been told spring of this year, I believe, but I want to confirm that. Also, in confirming that, is the Minister able to let us know what the anticipated timeline is for implementing the recommendations that come out of that? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, we are anticipating a report back from the panel this spring and then looking to take that to the departments and into the government to review, to have our own consultations internally and also, once we have some ideas of how we might implement the recommendations, to continue to engage and do proper consultations, including with standing committee, and then through Cabinet. Again, while I am expecting the recommendations this spring, the final implementation of recommendations will be rolling, and it will be rolling because some may be easier to implement than others, some may take more time, some might require more and further discussion or consultation. However, my expectation is that, by the summer, we will be seeing some changes in place. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 672-19(2):
POLYTECHNIC SCIENCE PROGRAM

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I spoke about earlier in my statement, I am very excited that one of the areas the polytechnic will focus on is skilled trades and technology. I have been happy with the information that has been released to date, but I am hoping to get a little more out of the Minister about where we are going with this. Can the Minister expand on what this specialization is presently going to look like? Is it going to be a building science program of some sort, or is it an architectural program or an engineering degree? I am just wondering the extent of this skilled trades and technology expansion the polytechnic is aiming for. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member for the questions. The skilled trades and technology is an area of specialization, so it's not a program; it is one of the four areas that the college is going to focus on initially. The reason to start there is, first of all, it will be a polytechnic and that is what polytechnics do, but also those are a lot of the things that the college does right now and does well. Initially, it's going to be building on those. As we move to become a polytechnic university, there will be a research component. We have recently added a position of applied climate change research chair in Inuvik, and that is the type of thing that I can see that research happening around, is northern building. I heard the Member's statement, and it sounds like he could be writing for the polytechnic university right now because those are the kind of visionary things that I think that we all want to see. We all understand that the North has natural advantages, and we want to take advantage of those in every way that we can. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JOHNSON: I know the Minister is looking forward to getting the board and the polytechnic up and running so he can stop fielding so many questions about what they are going to do, and maybe one day, I will try to sit on that board. Right now, pretty soon, hopefully this summer, we are going to see a three-year economic plan for Aurora College, and I hear what the Minister is saying, and that is the building on current programming. However, I feel that the transformation requires new programming; it requires some sort of new courses, new certifications. My question for the Minister is: especially in this area of skilled trades and

technology, when are we going to see some new programming and/or funding for the polytechnic?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Of course, the transformation will require new programming, but a transformation takes a long time. I wish Members could see into the guts of the college, essentially, and see what is happening right now because there is a lot going on. There are working groups. There are about 50 staff in the college who are putting in extra time and extra work to participate in this and ensure that the foundation and the structure of the college can support a polytechnic. We are not quite at the point I think where the Member would like us to be, but we will get there. Right now, it's ensuring that, when we start adding new things, it is on a solid foundation and that things are not going to have to change and that we are making those decisions with appropriate information. Soon, we are moving to a board of governors, and they really will be driving the work going forward, and that is going to be based on things such as the labour market, all of those, and also our engagement with our partners in the territory, Indigenous governments, who really have a stake in training, as well. They are already big partners with the college. I wish I could say that we are going to roll out these programs on these dates, but we are just not there yet. However, the future is exciting.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, I get that. I suppose my job now in this House is that, we seem to be on the right track, but I am going to push so that it gets sped up a little more. I understand there is a lot of work being done at the college, but I think one of the big areas is curriculum reform and looking at how all of our building science and all of our trades and technologies curriculum is. We largely just adopt the Alberta curriculum, and I know the Minister is having that conversation in regard to our high school curriculum, but the amount of work to build a northern curriculum that is going to be different and is going to attract southern students is a large amount of work. Can the Minister speak to when we can expect to see some of the curriculum in this trades and technology area reviewed? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Times are changing. There is a lot more technologies in the trades, as well. We see across Canada that jurisdictions are incorporating more technology. Here in the North, we will be incorporating northern-specific aspects to it. I have to point out, though, that when it comes to things like becoming a Red Seal and the courses you need, that is becoming standardized across Canada, so that you can get your second year here and go to Ontario and pick up there where you left off and vice versa. There is a push for that. That being said, there will be a northern element to it. Of course, that is going to roll out as the programming rolls out.

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

QUESTION 673-19(2):
EXTENDED CARE BEDS

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These questions will be for the Minister of health. Yesterday, the Minister of health made a statement on long-term care bed projections. It will probably come as no surprise to her that residents of Hay River became excited and not in a good way. Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister if she can confirm what this means for the 48 beds that were slated for Hay River and that are still in the capital budget. Are we going to see any changes to that? That will be the first question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Member for the question. The bed projection for Hay River is now 24 beds, and what happened to the other 24 is they are going to Fort Smith, where there is a need for more long-term care. The overarching goal here is to help people age in place. Obviously, we want people from people to Fort Smith to age in Fort Smith, if they can, rather than in Hay River. Thank you.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Can the Minister also confirm the quantity of staff that would have been required for a 48-bed facility versus now what I am hearing is a watered down 24-bed facility with what I am hoping is increased homecare?

HON. JULIE GREEN: I don't have that level of detail with me, so I will have to get back to the Member.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: If the department is looking at what I am hoping is additional homecare, are we looking at an increase in support workers in the area of homecare for Hay River if we are only getting 24 beds?

HON. JULIE GREEN: Again, I don't have an exact number, but the point of refocusing the long-term care beds is to enable people to age in place. We recognize that, for people to stay at home for as long as possible, they will need homecare support for some of their everyday tasks, whether that's bathing, mobility, food services. It might also be a visit from the public health nurse. There will be more homecare resources required in Hay River and in other communities in the NWT. The department is planning for that by entering into a partnership with Aurora College to enhance training of personal support workers so that, when the additional homecare supports and the additional

long-term care beds come online, we have staff ready to put into those positions.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Looking at the revised numbers, they have been revised down by 60 percent. When a decision is made to reduce a number like that, there is a need to explain it to the communities that are being impacted. I know that Fort Smith is happy, so they probably don't really care. I would like to invite and receive a commitment from the Minister that she will visit Hay River and meet with community members, those seniors who will be impacted by the decisions and those currently living in the existing extended care facility. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: I appreciate the invitation from the Member, and I will ask my staff to work with him on a date. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 674-19(2):
FUTURE OF TOURISM

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I didn't have my hand up, but I am happy to take the opportunity. My questions are for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. My statement today outlined the seismic shift in realities facing our tourism industry. Can the Minister give us an update on the status of the new tourism strategy and when we can expect it to be released? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes, it does seem that there a lot of steps and processes before things get released, but there is good reason for that. Tourism 2025, I am grateful that committee had the opportunity to look at a draft, and when that step is complete, it goes through Cabinet. The reason for taking some of those steps is to ensure that everyone can speak with one voice on the Cabinet side, that communications are ready to go, and we are now at that point. I am expecting that it can be, indeed, tabled before this session is over. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. It's good news. I have heard consistently from tourism operators and others related in the service sector that one of the most pressing issues is not necessarily developing new products or markets

but basic survival. Can the Minister tell us whether the new strategy addresses this issue of survival of tourism operators through the pandemic and whether there are any new programs, services, and funding to support them?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: That message is indeed loud and clear. It's one that comes to me, as well. It comes to the department. There is absolutely no mistaking, really, across Canada, that the tourism sector has been particularly hard-hit and is going to be slow to recover as a result of the pandemic. The reality is that border restrictions remain in place not only here, but in parts of all of Canada and, of course, internationally. That is having a huge impact and will continue to have an impact. I only say that to underscore the fact that this problem and this challenge is real and ongoing.

Tourism 2025 is the tourism strategy for five years. It's a five-year goal, a five-year plan, so that, at the end of that period, we are back where we were at 2019 levels, when we were on an exciting upward trend of rising, growing visitor attendance and visitor numbers here in the Northwest Territories. The here and now, of course, is really more around making sure that as many tourism operators and hospitality facilities and those that support the industry are there when the reopening begins.

Tourism 2025 isn't going to be a place where there are new programs to support the here and now. The here and now continues to be supported with the programs we have already had in for some time, now with respect to COVID-19 relief, in addition to all the various types of funding and programming from SEED, for example, at ITI. There are also quite a number of tourism program and products that have been shifted or opened up or encouraged for those who are looking to take some training, looking to shift their infrastructure, looking to create new products. Those funds are there, and we are doing our best continually to top them up. We are focusing on that here and now so that everyone is ready to take advantage of Tourism 2025. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. It kind of flows well into my next question. With the current travel restrictions in place and the likelihood that they will stay in place, probably for several more months, NWT residents, of course, are looking to explore the Northwest Territories a lot more. We certainly did that last summer ourselves. Can the Minister tell us what she is doing to support staycations and the tourism industry to take advantage of this new market of residents within the Northwest Territories?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, the staycations program that was supported last year through the Northwest Territories Tourism

Association, which is the destination marketing organization, saw a lot of success. It was well-received on social media, traditional media, and we're certainly intending to do the same to see that it can, once again, try to encourage residents to go out and explore our own home and take advantage of opportunities here. To that extent, also again, a lot of the programs that were put in place in response to COVID-19 were to support the businesses to adapt, to pivot. We're, obviously, coming up on a new fiscal year and looking for opportunities for businesses to continue to use those funds, to be ready to receive locals, and to do again what we did last year, which is to support the staycations. I just want to make one other note on that, really, is that the parks, also, which I know has come up here, parks this year knows the challenges it faced last year and will be even better placed to be responsive to those staycationers.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I feel like I need a holiday, now. No, seriously, that's all good news. When the pandemic begins to wind down, of course, we can expect that the NWT is going to open up, maybe, first, to other northern territories, and then Canadians, and then, hopefully, the international market again. Can the Minister tell us whether the new strategy accounts for a step-wise reopening of markets and how are we going to support the sector to maximize benefits? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, please. Everyone, go book your staycation right now. That's great news. The strategy has four key priorities in it, and I don't want to get a jump on what I'm sure will be an exciting announcement in the next couple of weeks, but it has strategic priorities that I think do speak to precisely what the Member is looking at. Again, it's not the short-term reopening of borders. That involves the Chief Public Health Officer, as well, but it really does speak to how this industry can be ready for that reopening. In terms of looking at what infrastructure is needed, again, short-term, medium-term, what is needed to support capacity to deliver on those products or on new products that might be developed here, particularly as businesses may be pivoting, and making sure that we improve and enhance the engagement that we have.

While COVID-19 has been challenging, the level of engagement with the industry, with the industry associations, I would say, has gone up significantly, to our benefit, to understand what they've gone through, but now to our benefit, to maintain that so that we continue to see what they need as we go forward. That's how the step-by-step reopening will happen is, again, with those levels of

communication there and in conjunction with the partnerships built up with them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 675-19(2):
INDUSTRY, TOURISM AND INVESTMENT
COVER LEASE FEES FOR LODGE OWNERS

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had said that I wasn't going to ask questions, but my colleague's questioning spurred one in my mind. I just have one question. It's very, very easy. The Minister of ITI only needs to say yes, and we can finish this off. I've heard a lot from constituents and others who are lodge owners in the North, and they really were grateful and thankful for the lease fee waive of \$840 last year. While I understand the Minister of Lands can't do that blanket this year, I am asking if the Minister of ITI can commit to finding funding within her department to cover the lease fees for lodge owners in the Northwest Territories, given that the promised vaccine is not opening up the borders for this summer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, it's always a bit nerve-racking when you hear that all you need to do is say yes. Let me take that back to have a discussion with Lands and see if there was some barrier there that I didn't understand and know what, in fact, that total budget line item is. I suspect it's not a huge ask, but again, I don't think that the Minister of Finance would be happy if I made commitments on the floor to commit money that I don't have a full grasp of. I certainly will commit to go back, get the numbers, and have a decision back to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. NOKLEBY: It would be my understanding that it's actually a very low number, and I do appreciate that the Minister has committed to go back to her colleague and have this discussion. I'm just going to take that as a yes because it's Friday, and we're at the end of the week.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. I will take that as a comment. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 676-19(2):
EMERGING WISELY PHASE 3

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we set out our Emerging Wisely Plan, I believe we

moved into phase 2 a long time ago, it feels like; summer or May, I believe. My concern is, we've kind of been in phase 2 for a while, but there have been more and more exemptions and more and more tweaks, and I think we're kind of in phase 2.5 right now. When I review the Emerging Wisely Plan, it seems we have met a lot of the targets to enter phase 3, so my question for the Minister of Health and Social Services is: what are the requirements to enter phase 3, or what needs to happen in order for us to reach phase 3? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the question. Some of the things that we need to look at in order to advance both the relaxation of internal restrictions and the relaxation of the border include things such as vaccine uptake in the NWT and what the science says about how effective the vaccines are to stop the transmission of the virus. We know the vaccines are effective to stop severe illness, but we don't know whether, once you have the vaccine, you can still carry the virus with you. You could still be exposed, and then carry the virus with you to another location. We have a significant portion of the population under 18 who have not received any vaccines, and we don't have the science yet on which vaccines may be useful for them. We have been looking, of course, at the variants. The variant numbers are growing in some southern jurisdictions. I last heard that 40 percent of the new cases in Ontario are variant cases. There are new variants in addition to the ones from the UK, South Africa, and Brazil, so that's another consideration.

What the Chief Public Health Officer has said is that, once we know more about these variables and once we have as much vaccine uptake as we hope for, which is 75 percent of the adult population, we will then be in a position to move into phase 3, and she said yesterday that she thought that would happen at the end of April. Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: I'm glad to understand some of the input such as vaccines and variants and how it works with under-18s, but one of my concerns is that, when we created the Emerging Wisely Plan, we didn't know what vaccines we were using. There was barely any talk of variants. The plan was largely created without considering these. I'm not sure that phase 3 is exactly where we want to go, anyway. I believe I'm hearing longer timelines for reopening the borders, different restrictions, so I don't get the sense that we're moving into the exact prescribed phase 3 as per a plan created months ago. I note some jurisdictions have been tweaking their plans. When this was first released, it was described as bit of a living document, but we

haven't seen those changes. Is the Minister willing to set out a new plan and a new timeline that factors in things like variants and vaccines, that sets out what the next year of COVID-19 could potentially look like?

HON. JULIE GREEN: This is my very first pandemic, and it is for the CPHO, as well. What she's been doing is working with the information that is available at the time. Certainly, Emerging Wisely now looks like an outdated document because so much has happened in the last 10 months or so since it came out. It's my understanding that she is, in fact, reviewing the plan and she plans to update it, and that that work will be with us publicly towards the end of April.

MR. JOHNSON: I'm glad to hear that, and I think we all recognize that there's a lot happening. The public, I think, just wants a plan. They want to see not an outdated one is the main concern, and I think it's causing a lot of anxiety. One of my concerns is that, whenever we ask these questions in the House of the Minister of health, there's this arms-length nature of the Chief Public Health Officer, and everything depends on when that decision will be made by that office. As such, it can be hard for the Minister or ourselves to give directions such as to have a new plan. Can the Minister speak to how we compare to other jurisdictions in regard to the arm's-length nature of the Chief Public Health Officer? Because I know this is not how everyone is treating the arm's-length nature of public health.

HON. JULIE GREEN: The Member is right. It's variable in the legislation across the country, which is directed at the provincial and territorial level. We have a CPHO; other places have a Chief Medical Officer. Some of them have a lot more autonomy than others, different reporting relationships, so really the only thing that matters is our own legislation and the powers that it gives the CPHO to manage a public health emergency. Are they the right powers? Are they being used properly? Are they the most effective response? I think these are all really great questions that we will revisit when the pandemic is over.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recognize we have to have those conversations, but I also think it needs to be very clear exactly where that line lies under our current legislation. For example, right now, the Minister is responsible for renewing the public health emergency every two weeks. That is solely at the discretion of the Minister, on advice of the CPHO. Can the Minister speak to whether any policy direction gets given every two weeks when there is a decision to renew

that emergency or not? Can the Minister say, "Yes, I will renew the emergency, but please give us a new updated plan with your recommendations?" Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: I don't provide direction of the kind that the Member has discussed to the CPHO. She is a medical doctor. She has specialized training to assess the risk and decide how to respond to it. We do meet often. We have a committee of Cabinet that is related to COVID. We have specific meetings that involve myself, the Premier, and the Minister of Finance, and so we discuss issues at play. At the end of the day, we provide our input, but we are not in a position to direct her to open borders, to produce a plan, to reduce self-isolation to seven days. Those are not options that are available to us, for a couple of reasons. One is the structure of our legislation. The second is that we have invested her with the authority to manage this pandemic from her skill set and knowledge, and so she is best placed to do that. I don't think you want me to do that, or the Premier to do that. What we're doing is investing that authority in her, and we are providing input.

When this new updated Emerging Wisely Plan is ready, I have no doubt it will be presented to the Regular Members for their comment. At the end of the day, she assesses the pandemic; she makes the public health orders that affect things such as self-isolation, border closures, and so on. We need to respect her authority because, as a matter of fact, what she has proposed so far has been very effective. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 677-19(2):
INDEPENDENT LIVING FOR SENIORS

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier, I had a conversation with the Minister of health about the small apartments or buildings that they have for independent living for seniors. We're looking at a shift to having seniors age at home, but it's not the only answer; it's part of a number of solutions. One area that I do like is having facilities or small, independent buildings beside the extended-care facilities where they could have additional and timely support, so I would ask the Minister: what are the benefits and what is the success of some of the buildings that have been in place for a number of years? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, homecare, of course, is not new. It has been

offered for years. We recently had the program reviewed by a third party, and they came up with some very strong recommendations for us to look closely at homecare services, what services we provide, where, and when. Those recommendations are going to be implemented within the life of this Assembly. The building piece is not really the Health and Social Services Department piece. It's really up to the NWT Housing Corporation. A few weeks ago, I went with the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation to Fort Good Hope to attend the opening of their new seniors' facility. It's not a long-term care facility; it's an independent-living facility. It's a building with nine units. I'm going to say the units are around about 650 square feet. They have linoleum floors, and everything is very accessible, with wide doorways, low counters, you can drive your wheelchair into the shower, and so on. They're really set up for people to age in place; you'd be able to stay there for a long time, and there wouldn't be any renovations necessary.

The Housing Corporation provided that half. The other half is that there are people who are going to move into that centre who need homecare, and that's the part that the Department of Health and Social Services, through NTHSSA, provides. We are very interested in expanding that partnership to other places. For example, yesterday, the Member for Nunakput talked about that in Ulukhaktok, and that, in fact, may be the answer for Ulukhaktok, that there is a building with a number of units in it where people can live independently with the support of homecare in that community rather than living in long-term care, which is more nursing-heavy and more for people who have very complex or ongoing needs that need 24/7 care. Thank you.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: I would ask the Minister of health if I could somehow convince the Minister of housing to provide some of those smaller buildings in Hay River, maybe as a pilot project in the community, because I know, in the K'atloodzeeche, I think they might have some. If we look at the aging at home, and I like this idea, it provides independent living, and I think it would give the seniors some sense of ownership of where they are. If I could convince housing, is she willing to have her department work and maybe look at a site adjacent to the existing extended-care facility and where the new one will be built?

HON. JULIE GREEN: I don't think I can make a commitment that's that specific right now, but yesterday, I had down here the seniors' planning study, which identifies how many seniors are in each NWT community over 60 and outlines different housing options for them. This is an NWT Housing Corporation document from the 18th Assembly. I know that the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation is very engaged with the

idea of providing more seniors' housing, but I don't know where that plan is going next. I know that the facility in Fort Good Hope was the end of a series of facilities like it built around the territory. That is something that she and I also need to talk about. We're going to have to have our own retreat to get through all these issues. We need to talk about how we're going to meet those needs because, if people are not going to go into long-term care and they don't want to live in their 2,500-square-foot house, then there obviously needs to be something else available to them.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: I brought up residency, and the reason why is that, within the last couple of months, I've seen a number of Northerners, indigenous to the NWT, who had to move south because there was nowhere for them in the South Slave to live. Being from Fort Smith, they came to Hay River, some of them, and they just ended up going south because they just could not find a place. What I have seen, being from Hay River and knowing what's going on, is: I do see people coming in from the South, taking up beds, taking up accommodations, and I see that as being taken away from Indigenous people and being taken away from northern people. I would ask the Minister if there is a residency clause; if not, would her department consider implementing one? If there is one, revisit it and see what we could do to give the benefit to Indigenous and northern people when it comes to extended care facilities.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Admission to long-term care has a single point of entry for the whole NWT. It's called the Territorial Admissions Committee. That committee includes membership from the health authorities; that is to say, professional health people from the health authorities and a public representative. They review all the applications to long-term care to determine eligibility. I don't know what the residency requirement is for that, but that's something that I can find out and come back to the Member with.

They, of course, manage the wait lists for long-term care beds, and I just have some updated information on the number of people on the waiting lists. Unfortunately, in Hay River, they have the highest waiting list with seven people waiting to get into Woodland Manor. Sorry. That's the second highest. The highest is actually in the Beaufort-Delta, nine people in the waiting list; seven in Hay River; six in Yellowknife to get into Aven Manor; six to get into the Stanton Extended Care Unit; three to get into the Fort Simpson elders care home; and then Sahtu, Fort Smith, and Tlicho don't have waiting lists. I am encouraged that these waiting lists are relatively small, but the fact is that beds don't turn over that often. I think the average stay in long-term care now is about two-and-a-half years. That's one of the reasons that we are building more

long-term care beds is to take into account this need.

I don't know about limiting residency by origin. I think that there is a residency requirement, but it's my understanding that, because we receive Canada Health Transfer money, we need to provide services to everyone who is a resident of the NWT. There isn't a distinction made between someone who meets the residency requirement of, let's say, one year, and somebody who has been here for their whole life. Those are certainly issues that I will investigate further and respond to the Member with.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The revision of the number of beds went from 400-something down to 160-something. I guess that's based on data, analysis, statistics, and whatever, but will the Minister make that information available to us as Members? Will it be shared with the public how they arrived at those numbers? I know people in Hay River are going to want to see how those were arrived at. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yesterday, I tabled the Bureau of Statistics study on the long-term care bed projections, and I also tabled the department's response to that study. Both of those are on the Legislative Assembly website, and of course, they are public documents available to everyone to look at. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to Commissioner's address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, reports of standing and special committees. Item 14, tabling of documents. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 355-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTIONS
503-19(2): HOUSING SHORTAGE IN NUNAKPUT
AND 574-19(2): EMERGENCY SHELTERS

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following documents: Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 503-19(2), Housing Shortage in Nunakput; and Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 574-19(2), Emergency Shelters. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 356-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
584-19(2): COMMUNITY WELLNESS PLANS

TABLED DOCUMENT 357-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
586-19(2): STANTON TERRITORIAL HOSPITAL
MEDICAL DETOX SERVICE

TABLED DOCUMENT 358-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
602-19(2): RESPONSE TO MEDICAL
EMERGENCIES IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following three documents: "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 584-19(2): Community Wellness Plans;" "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 586-19(2): Stanton Territorial Hospital Medical Detox Service;" and "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 602-19(2): Response to Medical Emergencies in Small Communities." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, motions. Item 17, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act; Committee Report 8-19(2), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on Motion 5-19(2), Referral of Point of Privilege Raised by Member for Monfwi on March 10, 2020; Committee Report 9-19(2), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on the Chief Electoral Officer's Report on the Administration of the 2019 Territorial General Election; Committee Report 12-19(2), Standing Committee on Social Development Report on Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act; Tabled Document 286-19(2), Main Estimates 2021-2022; Tabled Document 348-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021; and Tabled Document 349-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 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 hour 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 now call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of committee? Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. Committee would like to consider the following documents: Tabled Document 349-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021; Tabled Document 348-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021; Committee Report 12-19(2), Report on the Review of Bill of 20, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act; and lastly, Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act. Marsi cho, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We will take a short recess and resume with the first item.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 349-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021. Does the Minister of Finance have opening remarks?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am here to present Tabled Document 349-19(2): Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021. The supplementary estimates propose to add \$36.1 million to the 2020-2021 operating budget, of this \$30.8 million will be offset by revenues from the Government of Canada. Major items included in these supplementary estimates include:

- \$30.8 million to fund the GNWT's continued efforts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including:
 - \$28.2 million for costs funded by the Government of Canada's Northern Bundle 3,
 - \$2.4 million for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to increase supports to workforce development programs. These costs are fully offset by funding under the Canada-Northwest Territories Workforce Development Agreement, and,
 - \$263,000 for the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs to support NWT sport organizations. These costs are fully offset by funding under the COVID-19 Emergency Support for Sport Organizations Agreement.
- \$4.3 million for the Department of Health and

Social Services to fund increased costs in out-of-territory hospitals; adult out-of-territory supportive living services; and supplementary health benefits.

That concludes my opening remarks.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Do you wish to bring witnesses into the House?

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

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber. Minister, will you please introduce your witnesses for the record?

HON. CAROLIEN WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. On the right, Sandy Kalgutkar, secretary to the Financial Management Board, and on the left, Jamie Koe, deputy secretary to the Financial Management Board.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Welcome. I will now open the floor for general comments. Seeing no general comments, we will review the supplementary estimates by department. The committee has agreed to forgo general comments on each department. Does the committee agree to proceed to the detail in the tabled document?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee has agreed to begin the review with the Department of Education, Cultural and Employment. Does the committee agree to proceed to the detail in the tabled document?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Questions? Okay. We will begin with page 4, Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Education, Culture and Employment, labour development and advanced education, not previously authorized, \$2,400,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Okay. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Education, Culture and Employment, total department, not previously authorized, \$2,400,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Committee, we will now consider the Department of Finance on page 5. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Finance, directorate, not previously authorized, \$4,537,000. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. The housing repair initiative, how is that going to be actually used by the Housing Corporation, \$4 million? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. My understanding is that this funding is being used to help accelerate repairs, particularly on vacant units or units that required repairs to be liveable in order that, particularly, remote or rural communities would start to have necessary space for people who may need to self-isolate. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. This is coming almost at the very end of the fiscal year. Has the money already been used and allocated, and how many units were fixed up and used as a result of this federal funding? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, the funding was already advanced through the department for this purpose, and my understanding is that this has helped support repairs to 108 previously vacant units in 24 different communities.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. Nothing further.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any other questions? Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Finance, directorate, not previously authorized, \$4,537,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, we will now consider the Department of Health and Social Services, on page 6. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Health and Social Services,

administrative and support services, not previously authorized, \$269,000. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I had understood that the old hospital was going to be demolished. Can someone tell me when that is going to happen? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm not certain about the demolishing of the old one, although I know that the new facility is coming online in May 2021, so it may be that the demolishing of the old will coincide with the new. I can confirm if that's incorrect, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. Yes. I think we actually approved other money, maybe it was in the mains for 2020-2021 for this. As I understand it, not all the old services could be housed in the new hospital, so some are still being run out of the old hospital. The building is not in very good shape. The roofs are caving in, and so on. I just wonder how much more are we going to spend on a building that is going to get demolished before these services are moved into a new building. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. When the Hay River Health Centre was opened, it did not house all of the same facilities that were in the old building that is now scheduled for demolition. That was intentional at the time in terms of design of the new facility for the hospital, with the intention that this would be an opportunity to use spaces in the community for those additional services that weren't going to fit in there. As it was, that didn't work out, and that's why there is now the new facility that is being built for May 2021. As a result of which, rather than spending the money on the leases for those services, they are, of course, now having to instead continue to maintain enough within the old facility to house those services. This is homecare, social services, public health, environmental health, and community counselling. Those services are the ones that we're talking about that do need to remain housed somewhere. Right now, Madam Chair, because the expectation of the May 2021 opening is on track and on target, I am not expecting, at this point, to have to return any further, that those programs should be moving into their new facility on time. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Look, I want these services to continue, obviously, for people in Hay River. They're required services. However, it looks like the new building, then, has been delayed. Is that what I take, because you're here with a supplemental appropriation, that the construction of a new building has been delayed somewhat? Is that what has happened? Thanks.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. There were some delays over time. Again, no delay at this point in terms of the expected May 2021 date, but I would suggest, if I could, to direct it to the deputy minister to speak to the delays, just briefly, that they have encountered in the past getting to today. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Deputy Minister.

MR. KALGUTKAR: Thank you, Madam Chair. When the build of the new leased facility was announced, there was a short delay with some of the foundation work, so it did delay the start, but as the Minister has indicated, it is on track to be completed in May 2021. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any other questions? Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. Just talking about delays there, I think there were some heavy rains which caused some delays with the foundation and then probably some of the cold weather that we had this year. I'd like to ask about the old hospital. If we're looking at the reduction in the number of beds, a smaller facility, does that require knocking down the old hospital prior to starting construction, or will the old hospital be able to remain intact while the new facility is going up? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to make sure I'm understanding correctly. These programs and services that are currently still sitting in their old positions, those are going to be moving into the new building which is going to be opened May 2021, so construction is already under way. I'm not sure if that answers the question, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess I wasn't clear enough. What I'm talking

about is the extended-care facility that we're looking at that is going to go on that property. If we're looking at a smaller footprint, does that require knocking down the old hospital prior to construction of that new extended-care facility? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will commit to getting that information to the Member. My information before me right now is specific to what is needed to house these services until the new facility is ready, but I'll certainly commit to getting an answer for the interconnection or not as between the long-term care facility and the old hospital. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you. No further questions.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am just looking at the \$90,000 that is for the wastewater monitoring program. Given that we've recently expanded that to allow for more people to isolate in their community and, perhaps, there will be some future expansions of that program, is \$90,000 going to be enough? As this is offset by the federal government, if we need more, do we have the ability to go back to them to get more money, or are we going to be expected to cover any additional costs? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. That's an excellent question. As we do look to expanding which communities have people potentially self-isolating, wastewater sampling certainly is one of the ways in which we are protecting citizens. Look, for the meantime, much as when this first rolled out, we were looking to GNWT funds to provide the funding. As the program expands, whether locally or to other communities, as any of the COVID-19 efforts may need to still expand or modify as the pandemic evolves, they are being funded if they need to be by GNWT dollars and we continue to go back and speak to the federal partners about what we're doing, and they remain, I would say, very receptive and supportive. That's probably the best answer I can give, that, yes, we'll continue to go back and we'll see what we get. We've done very well so far, and I've been very grateful for it. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I probably know the answer to this, but I'll ask the question anyway: is the Minister ensuring, then, that all of the departments are coding and tracking additional costs related to COVID properly so that we can go back to the federal government and properly characterize how much money it has cost us to deal with this and including the additional special circumstances, given the North's remoteness and lack of basic infrastructure? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. Absolutely, that was something that we really rolled out early, early on in the pandemic. That is the only way we really can tabulate and figure out the total costs, is by ensuring that each department that is contributing to the effort is coding what they are spending that is specific to COVID. That information is what has allowed us to go to the federal government with a clear ask, with an explanation of what we are spending money on and why. Again, we have really done very well and been very well supported, which I think is a reflection on the facts that the departments are, in fact, doing exactly that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any further questions? Supplementary Estimates (Operation Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Health and Social Services, administrative and support services, not previously authorized, \$269,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operation Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Health and Social Services, not previously authorized, \$12,847,000. Questions? Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Turn to page 7, Supplementary Estimates (Operation Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Health and Social Services, long-term and continuing care services, not previously authorized, \$998,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. This is almost a million dollars, and I'm just wondering: where is it actually going and what is the money being used for? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. This funding was received as part of what is called Northern Bundle 3. Madam Chair, I just want to make sure that I am properly referencing the correct long-term services. Madam Chair, perhaps I might propose that we direct this to the deputy minister, as he might have it handy, to outline that.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Deputy Minister.

MR. KALGUTKAR: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess I wasn't typing fast enough. The majority of the costs were for infection control measures in our long-term care facilities and also to assist them to purchase PPE and things like that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Deputy Minister. Anything further? Supplementary Estimates (Operation Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Health and Social Services, long-term and continuing care services, not previously authorized, \$998,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Supplementary Estimates (Operation Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Health and Social Services, out-of-territory services, not previously authorized, \$3,458,000. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am specifically looking at the increased costs for out-of-territory supportive living services. My understanding is that, essentially, this budget line just keeps going up and up as more and more people get placed into southern facilities, and in fact, it has something like doubled in the last five years, the cost of it. I see we have another \$1.5 million as more and more patients end up in southern care. Can the Minister speak to what is driving that cost? Are there fewer and fewer of the needed services available here, or are we just simply having more people who require these services? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. What is driving the costs is twofold.

Number one, certainly, is in the number of individuals who require that care, and then the second simply being the increase in costs of care. Just speaking briefly to the volume, the volume does go sort of up in increments over time. With respect to the nature, though, of care, I'm not sure if that's the direction that the Member is seeking some information on. If it's that level of departmental detail, if I could just confirm it, then I would suggest that that's actually a question for the department of health.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know the health Minister is well aware of this area, as is the department, that this continues to go up. I just want to flag this as a priority area for review, given the increase in costs, and perhaps there is a way to repatriate more of these people. When I look at the amount of money being spent here, I want some sort of commitment that there has been a review of what is being provided down south versus what we could provide up here for the amount of money being spent here, because, by all projections, it will just continue to climb. I'm wondering if such a review is occurring. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. There is, of course, the sustainability plan that has been put forward just in the last couple of months on behalf of the department of health, and to the extent that this is a significant cost driver, I am quite confident that this will be but one part of the larger investigation into what is driving the healthcare costs. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Any other questions? Supplementary Estimates (Operation Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Health and Social Services, out-of-territory services, not previously authorized, \$3,458,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Supplementary Estimates (Operation Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Health and Social Services, supplementary health programs, not previously authorized, \$841,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Supplementary Estimates (Operation Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Health and Social Services,

total department, not previously authorized, \$18,413,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, we will now consider the department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, starting on page 8. Supplementary Estimates (Operation Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, minerals and petroleum resources, not previously authorized, \$150,000. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is \$150,000 to support the Mackenzie Valley liquefied natural gas project. I believe the Department of ITI also has a corresponding territory-wide LNG feasibility study going on. It's a little hard to want to remove this when it's fully paid for by the federal government, so I'm happy to see that. My main concern here is that the IRC is actually quite a ways ahead of us, I believe, in some of their projects and their feasibility assessments, and in fact, they are actually doing some work. I'm just trying to get a sense of why or how the GNWT's feasibility assessments fit into the IRC's LNG assessments. I note they actually own most of the gas in this area. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I certainly want to be assuring the Member, and this would really be more broadly reassuring, that ITI has engaged with IRC and made them aware of the extent and nature of what is intended with this project. It is meant to be something that can be complementary to their work. It's not meant to be in competition at all, but really, again, complementary to the work that they are already doing to advance their potential industry in this regard. With this project here, it's looking at feasibility of one possible delivery mechanism for LNG, and the marketing analysis more generally, again, is really not only for resources that might be found in the IRC region, but in other regions in the Northwest Territories. Again, to that extent, it would be complementary and supportive of the industry growth. Again, I can't emphasize enough that it's meant to be complementary, and we are keeping them very much up to date as to what we are doing so that they can use the information we get. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a bit of concern with these feasibility studies. When the LNG pipeline finally died, there were quite a lot

of comments from industries who had invested millions of dollars that they simply just were not trying again. There have been a lot of companies in the last few years who have looked at it and said it's not worth any private investment. I question what these reports do when we have them when industry is doing similar reports. What I am looking for is some sort of commitment that this feasibility economic analysis will be made public because it's one thing for the GNWT to have it, but we are never going to develop these resources. We need to find investors to do it. Can I get a commitment that these reports will be public, and hopefully, some investors can look at them and decide whether there is money worth investing? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I agree that the point of doing studies of this nature is to promote a potential industry and not to simply hold the cards to our chest. That doesn't benefit the government if we are trying to support the growth of an economic sector; but, and just a small "but," because, again, we do want to be respectful and engage with the Indigenous governments who are, in many cases, owners of the land or owners of these resources, I just want to ensure that, whenever we have done studies that they may have contributed to or may be relying on, I do need to go back to them first before putting studies out to the public so that we, again, ensure that what we put out is complementary to their efforts. Subject to that, I expect that we will be able to put some information forward. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Any other questions? Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. First, I just want to say that I think there was a lot of interest in this area and this topic when I was doing some travelling around and meeting with people, as well. I know it's mineral resources strategies that came out with Indigenous governments and organizations, that there was a lot of interest from other groups to also have similar strategies, and I think this also does apply into the oil and gas sector, as well. I do think there's a good synergy between the Department of ITI and these organizations. They work closely together and in conjunction. I know that the deputy minister makes a lot of effort to continue those communications. This is a great opportunity for us to look at our potential and for the federal government to pay for it, so my question is: do we anticipate this happening again, to further the studies of whatever may come out of this, because I am sure there will

be recommendations for further work, or does the Minister feel this is just a one-time shot that we are getting from the federal government? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Far be it for me to speak for the federal government, but certainly, Madam Chair, as far as just a sense of things, there is a growing interest in LNG right now, as there is a growing interest in a lot of green energy-related minerals and metals. I think both of those are areas that there is some potential and that the federal government is well-aware of that and that there is geopolitical interest in both of those. I am hopeful that, once these studies are done, that, again, not only are we sharing them with members of the public and, more specifically, members of the economic sector, but sharing them with partners in the federal government. I think that is an easier commitment, likely, to make in that it potentially could be shared confidentially, even if there are some elements that are limited. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would agree that, while, yes, you can't speak for the federal government, our inclusion in the national mineral strategy, I think, shows really quite favourable that they are looking at the North and recognizing the potential in the North. As well, we often heard about how our very strong regulatory system allows for certainty. Investors really like that and often speak to that. More of a comment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any further questions? Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. When it comes to oil and gas, that's kind of my favourite area. We are coming in, I think, to the five-year requirement for a review on the moratorium of oil and gas in the Beaufort Sea area. Keeping this alive, I think, is important and for this government to continue participating. Whether anything comes out of it, I am not holding my breath because of the price of gas right now. Our best bet would probably be selling to China or somewhere like that, to move it that way. There is an abundance of it around North America. I have no problem with this. It's paid by the federal government, and it allows us to continue our participation with Indigenous groups in the territories and maybe find ways to hopefully reduce cost of energy to communities in the Delta. More of a comment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Anything further? Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, mineral and petroleum resources, not previously authorized, \$150,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, total department, not previously authorized, \$150,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, we will now consider the Department of Infrastructure on page 9. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Infrastructure, regional operations, not previously authorized, \$3,425,000. Does committee agree? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Item 10 here around accelerating construction of the ice road, crossings at Tulita and Wrigley. Presumably, we know if that was already done; it was well into the season. What actually happened? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, it's done.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. The money has been spent. Did it come to \$125,000? I think it was being recovered from Enbridge, so has that already happened, as well? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, Madam Chair. That is correct. This was a partnership with Enbridge to accelerate the construction here: a good opportunity and a good example of where government efforts were able to support a private sector project. As far as the specifics of where the actuals landed, Madam Chair, I don't have those actuals in front of me, but I do know that, as I said, the work has been done. I will simply confirm where the actuals came in. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. It's great that the Minister can confirm it. Can she share it, as well? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, Madam Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am just looking at the \$3.3 million that is being put back into the Yellowknife Airport Revolving Fund as part of the fees waived due to the COVID-19 pandemic response. I am wondering the total amount that it cost the Yellowknife Airport Revolving Fund to have the fees waived during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Yellowknife Airport revenues are expected to be down \$12 million as a result of almost nine months of having fees waived over 2020-2021, a significant decrease. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I think, just a placeholder for lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, and while I appreciate that speed is much more important over perfection when we are making decisions like this, there were a number of businesses that do have leased land out on the airport property that did quite well during the pandemic and a number of businesses who weren't lucky enough to be on the airport land during the pandemic who didn't fare so well. I think that this is important to put in our lessons learned from the pandemic as to how we do economic support and economic recovery during pandemics so that we can be quick and efficient next time. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Always happy to take lessons learned. I would only, perhaps, suggest, if the Member wanted to follow up with me about, more specifically, what she is pointing at, that would only help us learn those lessons better. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: I'm good. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Any other questions? Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to go to the \$125,000 for the accelerated construction. Again, that is related to, I think, an oil and gas activity. I think it's important that we participate and we assist, especially when it comes to the ice roads because that should be our expertise here in the Northwest Territories, to ensure that any projects that may be in the area happen because it's a big economic boost to the communities in the surrounding area. My understanding is that this year it was all the way from Fort Simpson up into the Tulita area. I am glad that we got the money. I am glad that the road was built and that there was some benefit to the communities and businesses in that area. That was more of a comment. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. If there are no further questions or comments? Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Infrastructure, regional operations, not previously authorized, \$3,425,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Infrastructure, total department, not previously authorized, \$3,425,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, we will now consider the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs on page 10. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, public safety, not previously authorized, \$4,594,000. Does committee agree? Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am looking at the increased funding for isolation centre costs. Can I just have an explanation of why we need an extra \$4.5 million here? My understanding is that we actually were expecting to save about a million dollars a year from the projected budget due to having others pay for isolation costs. Can I just get some clarification on what is happening here? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is federal funding that is, in fact, helping us to support the isolation centre costs, so it is exactly that. It is specifically for the period from April to August 31st, so these would be the costs that were prior to the time -- sorry. Maybe the question is around where this is happening and where it's placed. It's under Municipal and Community Affairs because, up to August 31st, you will recall the COVID secretariat was not the coordinating entity for managing all of the costs. Yes, up to August 31st, this is money that is in fact offsetting the isolation centre costs until the COVID secretariat took over the management and coordination of that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Any other questions? Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, public safety, not previously authorized, \$4,594,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, regional operations, not previously authorized, \$2,369,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, support, recreation and youth, not previously authorized, \$263,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, total department, not previously authorized, \$7,226,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. Do you agree that we have concluded consideration of Tabled Document 349-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I just have a couple of general questions. Where does our supplementary reserve stand at as a result of this supplementary appropriation? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. We are in a deficit on what was being projected or held off for our supplementary reserve. We now have gone in for \$16,801,000. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. We are now \$16 million over budget on the supplementary reserve. The extra borrowing is considered short-term borrowing? We have to pay interest on that. What is the cost of that extra borrowing? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. We are estimating that servicing this portion of additional debt is approximately \$60,000. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. All right. Committee, do you agree that you have concluded consideration of Tabled Document 349-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Mr. Norn.

COMMITTEE MOTION 87-19(2):
CONCURRENCE MOTION Tabled DOCUMENT
349-19(2): SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 3, 2021-
2021, CARRIED

MR. NORN: Yes, Madam Chair. I move that consideration of Tabled Document 349-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, be now concluded and that Tabled Document 349-19(2) be reported and recommended as ready for further consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. Mahsi cho, Madam Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Tabled Document 349-19(2) will be reported as ready for consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. Thank you, Minister. I think the witnesses are going to stay in for the next one, as well. Just give me a couple of minutes to get my stuff ready. Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 348-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021. Does the Minister of Finance have any opening remarks?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. Very briefly, I am here to present Tabled Document 348-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021. The supplementary estimates propose to reallocate \$5.11 million from the Department of Health and Social Services' capital budget to an infrastructure contribution to Avens, a community for seniors, to ensure that the costs associated with the new laundry and kitchen facilities are correctly reflected in the public accounts. Of this amount, \$2.5 million will be provided to Avens in the 2020-2021 fiscal period, with the remaining portion being accounted and provided for in the 2021-2022 fiscal period. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. I will now open the floor for general comments. Are there any? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. This does not affect our bottom line in any way; it looks like it's just an accounting exercise, so can somebody just explain to me why this wasn't considered an infrastructure contribution the first time around? Why didn't it show up in the capital estimates? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. It was a change of plans, as I understand it. Maybe I will propose that this go to the deputy minister, and then he can weave in why this matters from the accounting perspective, please. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Deputy Minister.

MR. KALGUTKAR: Thank you, Madam Chair. When it was initially approved, it was for an expansion of existing kitchen and laundry facilities, and because of the new Avens pavilion being constructed, they are now going to build a completely new facility. Because that facility is owned by Avens and operated by Avens, that is why the change in accounting treatment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there other general comments? Seeing no further general comments, we will review the supplementary estimates by department. The committee has agreed to forgo general comments on each department. Does the committee agree to proceed to the detail contained in the tabled document?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): The committee has agreed to begin with the review of the Department of Health and Social Services. Committee, we will begin on page 6. Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Health and Social Services, operation expenditures, long term and continuing care services, not previously authorized, \$2,555,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Health and Social Services, operation expenditures, total department, not previously authorized, \$2,555,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, we will turn to page 7. Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Health and Social Services, capital investment expenditures, health and social programs, not previously authorized, negative \$5,110,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, Department of Health and Social Services, capital investment expenditures, total department, not previously authorized, negative \$5,110,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. Do you agree that you have concluded consideration of Tabled Document 348-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Mr. Norn.

COMMITTEE MOTION 88-19(2):
CONCURRENCE MOTION TABLED DOCUMENT
348-19(2): SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES), NO. 3,
2021-2021, CARRIED

MR. NORN: [Microphone turned off] ...I move that consideration of Tabled Document 348-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, be now concluded and that Tabled Document 348-19(2) be reported and recommended as ready for further consideration in formal session to the form of an appropriation bill. Marsi cho, Madam Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Tabled Document 348-19(2) will be reported as ready for consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriate bill. Thank you, Ministers, and thank you to the witnesses for appearing before us. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber. Committee, we have agreed to consider Committee Report 12-19(2), Report on the Review of Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act. I will go to the Chair of the Standing Committee on Social Development for any opening remarks. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act, received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on November 4, 2020, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Development for review on February 10, 2021. The standing committee held a public hearing with the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment and completed its clause-by-clause review of the bill with the Minister on March 2, 2021. The committee supports the introduction of emergency leave, however, thoroughly debated the delicate balance between the rights of employees and that of employers. During the clause-by-clause review of the bill, the committee passed one motion with concurrence from the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. I would like to thank the stakeholders that provided valuable feedback during the review of the bill and thank the committee for their efforts in reviewing this legislation. I would also like to thank all Regular Members who participated in the committee's review of this bill. Individual Members

may have additional comments or questions. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. I will now open the floor to general comments on the Committee Report 12-19(2), Report on the Review of Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act. Do any members have general comments? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I, too, would like to thank the committee for allowing me to sit in on their proceedings with regard to Bill 20. As the chair said, the Employment Standards Act is almost kind of like a sacred piece of legislation where you try to balance the rights and interests of workers and employers. I think it does generally reach that kind of proper balance. I think that the committee worked very hard to improve particularly the group termination notice provisions of the bill that was brought forward. It really wasn't clear who would initiate the notice and where it would go and how employees would find out about it and so on. I think they made some great strides in improving much of that. I want to thank them for their efforts at doing that.

I'm still quite concerned with the emergency leave provisions in the bill. It is unpaid leave, and right now, with the federal government, that unpaid really is paid leave because you can apply for federal benefits. When the federal government ends those benefits, if we were in another emergency situation, there would be no pay for someone who needs to take emergency leave. This issue was raised by the Status of Women in their submission, and I think the issue is that it really wouldn't create any kind of an incentive for people to self-isolate if there was a pandemic going on. You would have people that would be going to work sick and possibly spreading things and so on. That issue has not been addressed in the bill. I know there is a recommendation that is going to come forward shortly that will attempt to try to deal with that but in any event that, I think, remains a piece of unfinished business.

The one area that I'm most concerned about is the group termination notice provision. That is because, at the end of the day, if and when these changes are adopted, workers will lose weeks of paid work. I think that is indisputable, and I will ask the Minister for his interpretation. Workers will lose weeks of paid work if this goes ahead as is. In any event, I do have some further comments and questions for the Minister when we get into actually reviewing the bill, and of course, I'm going to be bringing forward a couple of relatively small amendments to try to even up the balancing, I think, a little bit better to improve the bill a little bit further. Again, I want to thank the committee for its hard work. This is a

difficult, complex set of changes that had been proposed, and I think that the committee did a good job at trying to reach a better balance. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. This was my sort of first opportunity to really delve into legislative work sitting on this side of the House. I found it to be a really interesting process, and I'm not quite sure if I fully understand how everything is supposed to work. I do really appreciate the Minister and the clerk for walking us through it and being patient and answering questions, of myself, anyway. One thing that I do just want to comment on generally is that I find that this is an opportunity for us to get ahead of a situation that could occur next time. This is a lesson learned from COVID where we're trying to make things so that, when a situation occurs, the red tape is not necessarily there and we can react more nimbly.

While it may not be perfect in addressing all the situations because, honestly, we can't put the onus always back onto the very struggling private sector to pay when we wouldn't be doing that in other scenarios, I see where this would be a difficult thing for us to navigate. However, it's a situation that will occur anyway when there is an emergency, that notification will not be able to be given, and instead of leaving companies sitting in violation of an act or a regulation, instead, they can deal with the situation and not be penalized for it. Employees will still be paid out under the contracts for the amount of leave that they are entitled to. Again, I think this is a bigger conversation, then, about whether or not service workers and people who generally don't have great benefits as employees actually should deserve a better benefit package, and I think that's the conversation that should be had if we're talking about people getting unpaid leave. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Any other general comments? Seeing no further comments, Member for Kam Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 89-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 12-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT -
REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF BILL 20: AN ACT
TO AMEND THE EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
ACT – PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON
PRESCRIBED EMERGENCY PROVISIONS,
CARRIED

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment undertake public consultation to

develop prescribed emergency provisions, including those that have already been defined in relevant sections of Bill 20. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. The way the bill reads, the Minister does have the ability to bring forward regulations to further describe, or prescribe, I guess, in what situations unpaid emergency leave would be made available to employees. The Union of Northern Workers, in its written submission, suggested that, if and when these regulations are made, it would be a good idea to allow for a period of some form of public consultation. That's consistent with a lot of things that we heard in the last Assembly about interest in public participation and public comment on the development of regulations, so I do support this motion. I thank the Union of Northern Workers for bringing it forward, and I hope that the Minister will accept this and find a way for the public to have some involvement in finding in what situations this emergency leave might continue after this pandemic. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Member for Kam Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 90-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 12-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT -
REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF BILL 20: AN ACT
TO AMEND THE EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
ACT – FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR
EMPLOYEES ON UNPAID EMERGENCY LEAVE,
CARRIED

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment undertake a review of the territorial government programs and policies to allow financial resources to be made available while an employee is required to take unpaid emergency leave. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes. This issue was raised in written submissions from the Status of Women Council and the Union of Northern Workers. As I mentioned earlier, it is good that people will have access to unpaid emergency leave. What that means is that, if they have to go and self-isolate, an employer has to allow them to take the time off. It's unpaid, but their job is kept for them so that they can return to a job. It's not just the individual employee; it can be a member of their family who might need care, and so on. I think that's a good thing to do, and in fact, we are actually required to do it, if you read the plain-language version of the bill, because we have accepted through the Safe Restart Program that the federal government has. We were required to make this change to our legislation, so that's a good thing.

The downside is that, as I said earlier, there is no incentive for someone to take the unpaid leave. Some people are just not going to even be able to afford to take unpaid leave, so there is no incentive for someone to self-isolate and stop a pandemic, necessarily. Thank goodness we have the federal funding now, during the pandemic. When that's finished, I'm not sure that this is going to help, and that's, I think, precisely what the Status of Women Council said. We need to find a way to ensure that, if we want people to behave correctly and isolate and so on, there has to be a bit of an incentive to help them do that. They have to be able to continue to make some kind of a living. How that gets covered is the essence of this motion. Is it something that should be covered by the employer, should it be covered by government, or a combination of those? That's an interesting question, and I think that's what is at the heart of this motion, is to consider whether we can find ways to support people who need to take emergency leave and how we're going to pay for that. So I would encourage that the Cabinet respond positively to this motion and investigate ways to make this unpaid emergency leave actually paid into the future. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Further to those comments, though, I would like to go to bat for the business industry. The majority of our private sector is small businesses, considered small businesses when you look at the rest of southern Canada, et cetera, so if the GNWT looks at this and decides to put the burden or the onus back on the private sector, save a few large, large mines that might be able to handle it, I don't think others would. I'm just putting forward that I would very much like to see the government consider creating a social program for emergency access. I don't know what you would call that, but something similar to, say, a FEMA-type situation in the US

where, if there is an emergency, people can apply for it, you have several pots of funding throughout all of your departments that cover this type of situation. We saw it for ENR with the trappers mitigation fund, so maybe perhaps, rather than having these little pots of money sprinkled in all the departments, it should become a centralized emergency fund that anybody can access and that would reduce some of the red tape and duplication of effort. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm supportive of this motion and conducting the review, but I just want to make a few comments. Right now, the Northwest Territories provides five unpaid sick days a year. The Yukon provides 12. We're actually kind of behind in a lot of our employment standards. I know there was a huge debate about paid sick days and putting that burden on the employer. We probably couldn't jump to 14 paid sick days right away. There would need to be some sort of government support, but as the Member for Frame Lake noted, right now, the federal government has a program. There is an appetite. The federal government has been reaching out to the provinces and territories to find a way for Canada to get paid sick leave. We're kind of in this tension, this roadblock where no one wants to go first, but I think this is something our government needs to take on and be a champion for, that there is some sort of path to paid sick leave, whether that is, as the Member for Great Slave mentions, an emergency fund that people can access from government; or the way vacation pay works, is it's taken off your paycheque and then banked and then you access that leave that we mandate through the Employment Standards Act.

There are different ways to get to paid sick days, but the legislation that was brought forward is, I guess, okay. We probably should have passed this months ago, when people actually needed their leave much sooner during the pandemic, and I guess the government kind of failed on the opportunity to find a path forward for paid sick leave. I know there are people right now who are hiding the fact that they're sick and they are still going to work because they can't afford to take paid sick days, and that is a risk to all of our public health and safety. The fact that we're now, a year into this pandemic, asking the government to go and find a way to solve this problem just means it was an unambitious bill in the first place. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Member for Kam Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 91-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 12-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT -
REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF BILL 20: AN ACT
TO AMEND THE EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
ACT – GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO
RECOMMENDATIONS, CARRIED

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to the recommendations contained in this report within 120 days. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Thank you, committee. Do you agree that you have concluded consideration of Committee Report 12-19(2), Report on the Review of Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We have concluded consideration of Committee Report 12-19(2), Report on the Review of Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act. Thank you, committee. We will just take a five-minute break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I now call Committee of the Whole back to order. Committee, we have agreed to consider Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act. I will ask the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment to introduce the bill.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am here today to present Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act. I wish to thank the Standing Committee on Social Development for its thoughtful review and collaboration on this bill. Thanks to the valuable insight of the committee and

its staff, in cooperation with departmental representatives, the bill as amended achieves a desired balance between increased public transparency and the operational requirements of the Employment Standards Office.

This bill seeks to amend the Employment Standards Act to include two provisions that will provide protection to NWT workers and flexibility to employers during the COVID-19 pandemic and any future emergency. The first provision, emergency leave, provides job protection to NWT workers by allowing workers to access unpaid leave when they are unable to perform their duties because of an emergency, such as the ongoing public health emergency. This provision will not only encourage workers to comply with public health best practices but will also allow the NWT to meet its commitments to the Government of Canada under the Safe Restart Agreement and allow NWT workers to access the recovery benefits under the Government of Canada's COVID-19 Response Measures Act.

The second provision will provide flexibility to NWT employers by including an exception to the requirement to provide notice of group termination, in line with the notice periods set out in the act, when an unforeseeable event or circumstance beyond an employer's control occurs that prevents the employer from respecting the notice period in the act. Employers will still be required to provide notice of group termination to the employment standards officer and any applicable union as soon as possible, and employees will retain their entitlements to individual termination notice or pay in lieu of notice.

I am pleased to bring forward these amendments that will both strengthen worker protection and provide flexibility for employers and which are consistent with actions taken by other jurisdictions in response to the pandemic. This concludes my opening remarks, and I would be pleased to answer any questions that Members may have regarding Bill 20. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. I will now turn to the chair of the Standing Committee on Social Development, the committee that considered the bill, for opening comments. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Having just introduced Committee Report 12-19(2) a short time ago, I have no additional comments on Bill 20 at this time. Again, I wish to thank committee, the stakeholders that provided valuable feedback as well as all Regular Members who participated in the committee's review of this bill. Individual Members may have additional comments or questions at this time for the Minister. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister, would you like to bring witnesses into the Chamber?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Yes, I would.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber. Minister, please introduce your witnesses.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Today, we have Ms. Haley Mathisen, manager, employment standards, on your left, and Ms. Laura Jeffrey, legislative counsel with the Department of Justice, on the right. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, and welcome. I will now open the floor to general comments on Bill 20. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I'm still concerned about the group termination notice provisions in the bill, but I would like to ask the Minister whether there were any public consultations in preparing the bill. Thank you.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. No.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. Can the Minister provide an explanation as to why there was no public consultation in preparing the bill? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. In response to the pandemic, the department decided to implement measures that exist in virtually all other jurisdictions to assist residents and businesses. It wasn't something that required extensive public consultation at the time because these measures are fairly clear-cut across Canada, and time was of the essence, as well, despite the fact that I know that this bill seems to be coming in late, considering the situation. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I was going to make the same comment, that the pandemic has been going on for a year, and the bill arrived maybe a month or two ago. It looks to me like there would have been an opportunity for public consultation, certainly with employers and employees, in some ways. I want to turn, though, to the group

termination notice provisions. It looks like they have been in place in the current legislation since 2008. I am just wondering why they are being changed now. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. During the pandemic, we saw a lot of businesses disrupted. We saw the mines halt operations with really no notice. We saw international flights cancelled. Tourists stopped coming into the territory. We realized there were employers who were in situations, who, due to those monumental unforeseen situations, would find themselves in violation of the act at no fault of their own. We didn't want a situation where there is a contractor up at the mines, and they have 50 employees, and that's their only contract, and the mine shuts down one day and says, "You send everyone home. We're done. We're not working." All of a sudden, that company would be in violation of this act if they had to lay everyone off because of that situation. That doesn't necessarily seem fair. We wanted to ensure that, in these very rare, unexpected, and exceptional circumstances, there was an opportunity for some fair dealing with those companies. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. How often do we track the number of group termination notices that are given under Section 41 of the act? Do we track that over time? Has it ever been really used before? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I would like to hand this to Ms. Mathisen. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Ms. Mathisen.

MS. MATHISEN: Thank you Madam Chair. Our office doesn't typically track the number of group terminations that occur, but they do occur from time to time. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Just to be really clear, was there a request from employers, individual companies, bigger employers, to make this change? Where is the impetus coming from? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. We received correspondence from, I guess you would say, an industry lobbyist group, if that is what the Member is referencing, but it was really the northern experience and the situation we found ourselves in that led to the inclusion of this. We often receive suggestions from lobbyists about what we should be doing in terms of our employment legislation, and it is not the case that it is just automatically implemented. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. I appreciate the Minister's frankness there. I guess we were lobbied to make this change. I need to turn to the law clerk, Madam Chair, or I'll start with the Minister. I understand that, of course, there are individual termination provisions in the act and that people can actually get paid out. There are the group termination notice provisions, as well; people don't get paid out. However, if this is passed, it appears to me that some workers, if they work for a larger workplace with 20 or more employees, they could lose weeks of paid work as a result of a waiver being granted. Is that the Minister's interpretation of how this could affect employees? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: No, that is not my interpretation. This isn't an application process whereby a company thinks that perhaps they can lay off employees sooner by applying to the government. That is not how this works, at all. Employers will provide notice of group termination, and if they haven't provided adequate group termination, under the current act, they are in violation of the act. What this amendment would do would be to allow the government, the employment standards officer, to look at the situation surrounding that termination and determine whether or not the employer met all of the criteria in the act. If they did, then they would not be in violation of the act. However, any sort of individual notice of termination or pay in lieu of notice is governed by a completely different section of this act, and this does not affect individual employees' rights, at all. This is really an administrative section that involves an employer and the Employment Standards Office and, in applicable situations, trade unions, so this does not give companies the right to terminate employees sooner than they can now. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. I'll try one more time maybe. Right now, there is no provision for a waiver in the legislation. This bill is about providing an opportunity for such a waiver, which would allow for the shortening of the group notice, a group termination notice period. If a waiver is accepted or ordered by an employment standards officer, employees will lose weeks of paid work. Is that not the case? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: That is not the case. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I would like to seek the opinion of the law clerk on this, please, Madam Chair.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: I think he's seeking the opinion of the law clerk.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Okay. Mr. Clerk.

DEPUTY LAW CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Kruger): Thank you, Madam Chair. The act provides at Section 41(3) that no employer shall terminate the employment of any employee for which a notice of termination is required before the required period of notice has expired. That provision of the act is remaining. It is unaffected by the bill, and the bill does not affect individual entitlement to severance or notice. Those are dealt with in a separate section of the act. However, insofar as Section 41(3) goes, that no employer shall terminate the employment before the required periods of notice has expired, what the bill would contemplate is that the employment standards officer would then have the ability to set the appropriate period of notice and that the employer would not be able to proceed with the group termination before the expiry of whatever that notice is determined to be.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. I appreciate that. There is no waiver provision in the legislation as it stands now. This would provide a waiver which could conceivably, or would if the employment standards officer issues an order, shorten up the group notice time period. Thus, workers could lose weeks of paid leave. Is that a correct interpretation? That's for the law clerk. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Law clerk.

DEPUTY LAW CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Kruger): Thank you, Madam Chair. It is possible that the employment standards officer could decide to reduce the period of notice to a period lower than what is currently in the act. That is correct.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any other general comments? Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. Just listening to some of my comments to my colleague here and some of the opening remarks, there was mention that similar acts to this act are happening in other parts of the country. The question to the Minister is: has there been a cross-jurisdictional scan for this act? Thank you.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Yes, there has, and every jurisdiction other than the NWT and Nunavut have similar provisions to the group termination provision. Thank you.

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

MR. NORN: No, nothing further. I just wanted to know that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Are there any other general comments? Does the committee agree that there are no further general comments? We can proceed to clause-by-clause review of the bill. Committee, we will defer the bill number and title until after consideration of the clauses. Please turn to page 1 of the bill. Clause 1, does committee agree?

---Clauses 1 through 10 inclusive approved

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Clause 11? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I do have a few more questions of the Minister on this clause, and they really pertain to page 6, over on the next page. I just wonder: why is the employment standards officer the individual who is making the determination? Why is it not the Minister? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I believe that is best practice. I think there are maybe two jurisdictions in Canada in which it's the Minister who makes these types of decisions. There is more to this than just reading a briefing note and making a decision, and that's what Ministers are good at. There is case law that has to be looked at; there is

substantial case law around provisions like this in Canada. Perhaps I could ask Ms. Mathisen to explain because I saw what happened during the pandemic when the employment standards officers had to make decisions. I saw the work that went into making those decisions and the things that they had to look at, the research they had to do. Perhaps I can ask Ms. Mathisen to explain the process and why it is an appropriate decision to be made by an employment standards officer. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Mathisen.

MS. MATHISEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. The employment standards officer would be making the decision, but as the Employment Standards Act is under the Minister's authority, he would still technically be accountable for the decisions made under the act. I would like to clarify: the language that we used in Bill 20 was modelled after other jurisdictions' language in this regard. As the Minister noted, there is substantial case law that does exist already that would help guide our interpretation of these provisions should a situation occur, and so that would be very beneficial to our office in determining whether or not a waiver would be granted or ordered. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I'm still of the view that I think this should be the Minister making a decision. The Minister should be held accountable. It's probably not going to happen all that often, I hope, and I think it has lots of political ramifications. I think the Minister should be the one making the decision, but I'm going to let that one go for now. I'm just wondering: the way that this section reads now, this is not an application-based process. Somehow, a notice of termination lands on an employment standards officer's desk, and they have to make the determination about whether it meets the timelines set out in the bill or the act. Then they have to determine whether all of these terms and conditions are met. That seems to place the onus of dealing with a waiver on the employment standards officer rather than on an employer, so why is this done this way? Why is it not an application-based process? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. The notice is essentially an application. If there was an application, it would be a duplication of the information contained in the notice, and so it would just be more paperwork. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Is there a prescribed form, then, for notice, or is it just a letter that an employer would submit? Is there direction in the bill that the notice should contain reasons as to why a waiver is being sought? I don't think that's the case at all, but I'd like to hear from the Minister. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. For those operational details, I would ask you to hand it to Ms. Mathisen.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Ms. Mathisen.

MS. MATHISEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would add that, first off, in the committee's motion to amend, they had also considered including an application process, and we had had a discussion about whether an application would be appropriate. Our department's fear in introducing an application was that it could actually open up scenarios where employers might potentially test the waters by submitting an application to our office to try to circumvent a proper group termination notice. Our intention with this bill is that it would only apply to very few exceptional scenarios. Although it may not read that it's written out that an employer would be required to provide specific reasons, upon receipt of inadequate notice, our office would contact the employer and ask for information to verify whether the circumstances met the criteria in the waiver of the exception provisions. That's typically how things work in employment standards, is that there is a dialogue back and forth when making these decisions and that dialogue would continue until our office felt satisfied we had enough information to make such a decision. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I appreciate that explanation. I just don't understand why we wouldn't make this an application-based process. Just getting a notice of termination, the employment standards officer, then they have to determine whether a waiver is being sought in the first place, then they have to determine whether they need more information. Why not just make it clear right up front that it's an application-based process? I think the wording in the bill now is going to delay a decision because the employment standards officer is going to have to go back and forth. I just don't get this.

My preference is that the onus be put on the employer to say very clearly, "We are seeking a

waiver, and here's why." Leaving this on the back of the employment standards officer, I just don't think is an appropriate way to do this. The onus should be on the employer if they're going to seek this, and I don't think it has to be an onerous thing. I think they can develop a form, check off all the information, provide the contact information. "We are seeking a waiver, yes, and here's the reason why we're seeking a waiver." It could be done very easily. However, to just get a letter that we're going to terminate a number of employees, and then the employment standards officer has to figure out whether it fits the right time period, and then they have to go back and ask for more information about what the grounds are for the waiver, it just doesn't seem to make any sense to me. With that, Madam Chair, I want to move a motion to amend this section, if I may.

COMMITTEE MOTION 92-19(2):
BILL 20: AN ACT TO AMEND THE EMPLOYMENT
STANDARDS ACT - DELETION IN SUBCLAUSE
11(3) OF PROPOSED SUBPARAGRAPH
41(6)(A)(II), DEFEATED

MR. O'REILLY: I move that clause 11(3) of Bill 20 be amended by deleting the portion of proposed subclause 41(6) preceding paragraph (a) and substituting the following: "(6) On application, the employment standards officer may, by order, waive the application of subsection (2) if the officer is satisfied that." Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Look, I don't want to drag this out any longer than I have to, but, Members, if you want to see what this actually does, everybody has a copy of Bill 20 in the grey binders underneath your desk. If you want to look at this, all this does is add two words at the beginning of clause 6 or whatever it's called here. The two words are "on application." Then it's very clear that it's an employer who is seeking a waiver and that they should be providing some information to the employment standards officer up front. I think this will shorten the period of time for getting to a decision and just allow for a more transparent and a quicker decision at the end of the day. Look, I didn't walk the halls to try to lobby everybody. That's not how I do my stuff here in the House. If you think this is the right way to do something, I would hope that you would vote in favour of it. I don't think I really have much else to add, Madam Chair. Thank you.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. This was discussed, the idea of an application, while we were

working with committee. Ultimately, we came to an agreement that did not include an application. One of the reasons that I provided, and I don't know how influential this was on committee, but once we start introducing applications for this, it will give companies the opportunity to see if they can perhaps game the system. It allows them to test the waters. "Maybe I'll put in an application to see if I can lay people off sooner." That's not at all what this is intended for, this clause, and this motion introduces that idea. If anything, it would, I think, waste the time of the Employment Standards Office because they would have to deal with those companies who are testing the water.

I want to assure everyone that, if there is a notice of group termination, if there are 25, 50, 100 people getting laid off, you had better believe that the Employment Standards Office pays attention and deals with that immediately. It doesn't waste time; it doesn't dilly-dally and wait to make a phone call back; it jumps on it. That's what they do. In my opinion, I see this as adding red tape and adding time and really being contrary, I think, to what the Member's intent is here. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. This was discussed at committee at length, and I do see both where the Member is coming from and also where the Minister is coming from. Ultimately, where I ended up sitting was feeling that I wanted to make sure I was doing my due diligence to ensure I was protecting the rights of employers and making sure that, if somebody decided that they were going to go down this path, that they were fully committed to it before doing it and respect the views of the department that it would potentially open up opportunity for people to game the system. Ultimately, I won't be supporting the motion for that reason, in that I feel that it is important that, if somebody is going to do a group termination, that they are committed to it from the outset. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Question has been called. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I am not sure I can accept what the Minister said. Section 41(1) of the act, and this is one that is not being changed, says that an employer who wishes to terminate the employment of 25 or more employees at one time, or within a period not exceeding four weeks, shall give copy of the notice of termination

to the employment standards officer and the trade union of which the employees may be members. This precludes a company from going on a fishing expedition, and if an employment standards officer gets a notice of group termination, and it's not for an actual termination, why would they even accept it? They could dismiss it very quickly.

I just don't accept what the Minister has said, that employers are going to be out there trying to game the system and that they are trying to do this testing the waters and so on. I just don't accept that as a valid reason to try to shift the onus back into the employment standards officer. I think it's much cleaner, clearer, the onus should be on the employer to seek the waiver, provide the information upfront, and let the employment standards officer do their work. That's the intention of this motion. Thanks, Madam Chair, and, Madam Chair, I request a recorded vote. Thank you.

RECORDED VOTE

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. The Member has requested a recorded vote. All in favour, please stand.

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): The Member for Frame Lake.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All those opposed, please stand.

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

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Abstentions? None. Thank you. The results of the recorded vote are: 1 in favour, 13 opposed, no abstentions. The motion is defeated.

---Defeated

Clause 11, does committee agree? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I have one other issue I want to raise with this part of the bill. There are a number of reasons outlined that an employment standards officer could use to satisfy themselves that a waiver could be issued. Those are found in 6(a). The committee received correspondence from the Union of Northern Workers that expressed some concern about the broad and vague language of some of these

provisions, in particular around (ii), climatic or economic conditions, so I would like to ask the Minister whether there is any kind of further case law or definitions or whatever that might inform how an employer can seek an exemption for climatic or economic conditions? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I just want to point out that this clause isn't set up so that employers seek exemptions. Generally, what we expect to happen, and what happens across Canada, is that employers' backs are up against the wall. They are laying people off without checking legislation because it's a dire situation and they have no choice. I just wanted to make that point.

There is case law around the climatic or economic conditions. As was mentioned earlier, this was modelled after other acts from around Canada. There are also a number of qualifiers. In 11(6)(a), it says that it has to be an unforeseen event. It has to be beyond the control of the employer. If you see 11(6)(b), it says the employer has to exercise due diligence to avoid the cause of the termination. In addition to the case law, there are qualifiers right within the act as well. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I'm not sure that really answered the question. Look, I fully understand that there are a number of reasons why a waiver could be granted: destruction or major breakdown of equipment or machinery equipment and a number of kinds of emergencies. I just wonder about broad and vague language like "climatic or economic conditions," and whether there is any kind of guidance there. There doesn't seem to be any kind of guidance in the bill, the act itself, around how this could be interpreted. On what grounds would an employment standards officer be able to grant an exemption? Simply a business is doing bad, and it wasn't foreseen? That might be good enough for an employer to lay off their employees. What kind of guidance is available here? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Businesses do bad all the time. That's not unforeseen. If you are going into business, you should foresee that you might not do well. That's just the way of the world. When we talk about economic conditions, that's a broader condition. There is some guidance in case law, but what happened is we did try and work to narrow this language down. In the end, what we did

was we came back full circle, we had 10 times as many words that were basically a broad definition for climate or economic conditions. We could put "rain, snow, heavy winds," and other weather, but we are saying, basically, "climate conditions."

There were attempts made, but narrowing this down, I think, would lead us to situations where we are excluding companies who have legitimate claims from this exemption because they don't fit into the letter of the law. I think we've all seen policies that you kind of shake your head at because they don't seem to make any sense. It's a small technical point that is sort of working against the spirit of the bill. We wanted to avoid that, and we felt that there was enough case law, enough history with these types of clauses in Canada, that this was an appropriate level of detail. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I appreciate the Minister's explanation. I don't agree with it. If climatic or economic conditions lead to destruction or major breakdown of machinery or equipment, it's already covered with (i). If climatic or economic conditions lead to some kind of an emergency, particularly climatic conditions, it likely could be and would be covered off by the kinds of emergencies that are specified in the following three subclauses there. I think having this broad and vague language in here is not very helpful and is probably going to lead to things getting taken to court and so on for interpretations, appeals, and so on. I think that terms and conditions already laid out here with (i) about destruction or major breakdown of machinery or equipment or the other provisions around emergencies already cover off what could be covered by climatic or economic conditions. With that, Madam Chair, I'm going to move another motion. I guess I'm not doing too well here today, but I'll go ahead and do it anyway.

COMMITTEE MOTION 93-19(2):
BILL 20: AN ACT TO AMEND THE EMPLOYMENT
STANDARDS ACT – DELETION AND
SUBSTITUTION IN SUBCLAUSE 11(3),
DEFEATED

MR. O'REILLY: That Bill 20 be amended by subclause 11(3) by deleting proposed subparagraph 41, (6)(a)(iii). Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. I'm not going to prolong this anymore, I just think that having the broad, vague language in here is not in keeping with trying to find a proper balance between the rights of

workers and the rights of an employer. I think removing this line will help maintain a better balance. Thanks, Madam Chair. I request a recorded vote again. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I also had questions about this particularly, not so much around climatic conditions but around the economic situation in the scenario where somebody hasn't been doing their due diligence and had not been a proper businessperson and tried to use this. However, any further discussion with the clerk and the Minister and the pointing out of section A saying that it has to be beyond the control of the employer or because of an unforeseen event, but then, as well, that this is the discretion of the employment standard officer, who is someone that we have entrusted a lot of faith in already to make certain decisions when it comes to these sorts of things. What I'm saying is that I think of a scenario where, say, a road is wiped out by a climatic condition and workers can't get to the site, the site shuts down, nobody can work, and they are laid off. There won't be a state of emergency declared by any state or level of government at that time. It doesn't lead to destruction or major breakdown of equipment, so there are scenarios where I don't think the other subclauses do fit or would be able to accommodate for those types of situations, and as a result I will be voting against this motion. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Question has been called. The Member has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): The Member for Frame Lake.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All those opposed, please stand.

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

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All those abstaining, please stand. Thank you. The results of the recorded vote: one in favour, 13 opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is defeated.

---Defeated

Clause 11, does committee agree?

---Clauses 11 through 12 inclusive approved

Committee, to the bill as a whole. Does committee agree that Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act, is now ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act, is now ready for third reading. Does committee agree that this concludes our consideration of Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister and thank you to our witnesses. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber. Committee, we need to consider Bill 20. We have a few clauses that we had left out, so does committee agree that we can finish with the remainder of clauses?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Okay. Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act. We have done up to clause 12, so now, clause 13. Does committee agree?

---Clauses 13 through 17 inclusive approved

Committee, to the bill as a whole. Does committee agree that Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act, is now ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act is now ready for third reading. Does committee agree that this concludes our consideration of Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. Mr. Norn, what is the wish of committee?

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

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): 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 please have the report of Committee of the Whole, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MS. SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, we've been really busy. Your committee has been considering Tabled Document 349-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021; Tabled Document 348-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021; Committee Report 12-19(2), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on the Chief Electoral Officer's Report on the Administration of the 2019 Territorial General Election; and Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act. I would like to report progress with five motions carried, that Committee Report 12-19(2) is concluded, that Bill 20 is ready for third reading, and that consideration of Tabled Document 348-19(2) and Tabled Document 349-19(2) is concluded, the House concurs in those estimates, and that an appropriation bill to be based thereon be introduced without delay. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

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

---Carried

Item 23, third reading of bills. Bill 3. Minister of Infrastructure.

Third Reading of Bills

BILL 3:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE PUBLIC HIGHWAYS
ACT

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for the Sahtu, that Bill 3, An Act to Amend the Public Highways Act, be read for the third time, and, Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Mahsi.

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

RECORDED VOTE

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland):

The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, the Member for Hay River North, the Member for Great Slave, the Member for Kam Lake, the Member for Frame Lake, the Member for Deh Cho, the Member for Yellowknife North, the Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, the Member for Nahendeh, the Member for Sahtu, the Member for Hay River South, the Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh, the Member for Yellowknife South, the Member for Range Lake, the Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please rise. All those abstaining, please rise. The results of the recorded vote: 15 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 3 has had its third reading. Third reading of bills. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

BILL 12:

AN ACT TO AMEND THE APPRENTICESHIP,
TRADES AND OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATION
ACT

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 12, An Act to Amend the Apprenticeship, Trades and Occupational Certification Act, be read for the third time, and, Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The Minister has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please rise.

RECORDED VOTE

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland):

The Member for Hay River North, the Member for Great Slave, the Member for Kam Lake, the Member for Frame Lake, the Member for Deh Cho, the Member for Yellowknife North, the Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, the Member for Nahendeh, the Member for Sahtu, the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, the Member for Hay River South, the Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh, the Member for Yellowknife South, the Member for Range Lake, the Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please rise. All those abstaining, please rise. The results of the recorded vote: 15 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 12 has had its third reading. Third reading of bills. Minister of Justice.

BILL 13:

AN ACT TO AMEND THE INTERPRETATION ACT

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 13, An Act to Amend the Interpretation Act, be read for the third time, and, Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The Minister has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please rise.

RECORDED VOTE

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland):

The Member for Hay River North, the Member for Great Slave, the Member for Kam Lake, the Member for Frame Lake, the Member for Deh Cho, the Member for Yellowknife North, the Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, the Member for Nahendeh, the Member for Sahtu, the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, the Member for Hay River South, the Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh, the Member for Yellowknife South, the Member for Range Lake, the Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please rise. All those abstaining, please rise. The results of the recorded vote: 15 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 13 has had its third reading. Third reading of bills. Minister of Justice.

BILL 14:

AN ACT TO AMEND THE SECURITIES ACT

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Securities Act, be read for the third time, and, Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The Minister has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please rise.

RECORDED VOTE

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

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please rise. All those abstaining, please rise. Thank you. The results of the recorded vote: 15 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 14 has had its third reading. Third reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

BILL 16:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE INCOME TAX ACT

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Nahendeh, that Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, be read for the third time, and, Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Most Members will know that I am a man of principle, and I am going to stand on principle today with regard to this bill. Look, I support small business. You heard me earlier today make a Member's statement in support of the tourism sector. I spend a lot of my time in the south supporting small business. I am concerned, though, about the lack of effort on the part of my Cabinet colleagues to actually deal with the revenue side of our financial situation. I just don't really detect that there is much effort in a lot of work that is being done on the revenue side.

In discussing the bill here on the floor and in committee, I know now, and the public knows, that we are going to lose revenues as a result of this. We are going to lose \$1.4 million, but there is no effort being made whatsoever to try to replace that revenue. I made a couple of suggestions to the

Minister: increasing the number of tax brackets for personal income tax, or even continuing the rental charges in the current exploration licence for Husky Oil into the significant discovery licence; easy ways to, I think, and certainly the second one, come up with the lost revenues here.

Perhaps even more importantly, for me, Mr. Speaker, this is an issue of fairness. I asked the Minister very clearly: why are we doing this? The response was so that we could remain competitive. We wanted to be in line with other jurisdictions. I don't detect that that fairness principle or concept is being applied across all of our tax regime. We have cherry-picked one item to make us all look very popular, and I just don't think that that's an appropriate way to go. I don't think it's even good financial management.

For all of those kinds of reasons, Mr. Speaker, I am going to vote against this bill. If some want to characterize this as me being anti-business, let them go ahead. This is about tax fairness and making sure that we replace the revenue and that we apply that concept of fairness across all of our taxation. The last thing I want to say is that this will not benefit businesses right now because it only takes effect on January 1st of this year. It's not going to help businesses with a big part of what happened with the pandemic. Maybe they'll get some tax savings at the end of this year. That would be helpful for them, but this is not about pandemic relief. Mr. Speaker, for all of those reasons, I will be voting against the bill. Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The Minister has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please rise.

RECORDED VOTE

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

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please rise.

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): The Member for Frame Lake.

MR. SPEAKER: All those abstaining, please rise. The results of the recorded vote: 14 in favour, one opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 16 has had its third reading. Third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Monday, March 29, 2021, at 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
 - Question 638-19(2), Medevac Services
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Revolving Funds Act
 - Bill 25, An Act to Amend the Education Act
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Committee Report 8-19(2), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on Motion 5-19(2): Referral of Point

of Privilege Raised by Member for Monfwi on March 10, 2020

- Committee Report 9-19(2), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on the Chief Electoral Officer's Report on the Administration of the 2019 Territorial General Election
- Tabled Document 286-19(2), Main Estimates 2021-2022

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

- Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act

23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Monday, March 29, 2021, at 1:30 p.m. To everybody, have safe travels back home if you are travelling. See you in two weeks. Thank you.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 3:01 p.m.