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The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, December 8, 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. O'Reilly, Ms. Semmler, Hon. R.J. Simpson, Mr. Rocky Simpson, Hon. Shane Thompson, Hon. Caroline Wawzonek. Ms. Weyallon Armstrong:

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.): Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for the Status of Women.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 196-19(2):
RELEASE OF THE GNWT DRAFT ACTION PLAN
IN RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT FINAL REPORT
OF THE NATIONAL INQUIRY ON MISSING AND
MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 24(n) so that I may make a ceremonial offering. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

Mr. Speaker, I have just made a ceremonial offering to you as the presiding officer of this House to represent the people of the Northwest Territories. The offering is presented to you representing the traditions of many First Nations, Metis and Inuit, and their spiritual beliefs, values, and the principles by which they live. Through this offering, I am paying my respects and asking for their blessing but more importantly, to honour those Indigenous women, girls, and two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, and asexual plus peoples who have lost their lives or who have experienced or continue to experience trauma and violence.

Mr. Speaker, I attended the vigil for the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women on Monday night, December 6th, honouring the 14 young women who were murdered at the Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal over 30 years ago. Violence against women, girls, and gender-diverse people is not only part of our country's history but a reality that is faced by many today, across Canada and in the Northwest Territories. We must take a strong stand against all

forms of violence in order to change our society and create a safe space for all to thrive in.

Before I proceed with my statement, I urge anyone who feels they need mental health support to reach out to this number: 1-844-413-6649. This is an independent national toll-free call line that is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Mr. Speaker, later today I will be tabling the Government of the Northwest Territories' draft action plan in response to the calls for justice presented in the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. This response is the culmination of many months of the GNWT examining current programs and services and how they are provided, exploring and considering new ways of doing business, and affirming the importance and value of building partnerships to make change. Change must happen if we are to end violence directed at Indigenous women and girls and gender-diverse people. This draft action plan is a step towards that change.

I would like to stress that this is a draft action plan. Before we finalize the document, we will engage further on our proposed responses to the calls for justice. This action plan is meant to build relationships between government and those we serve, build trust, empower. We must make sure that people and communities across the Northwest Territories, including public servants at the front lines of delivering this action plan, and especially people with lived experience, have opportunities to further shape this action plan.

The GNWT draft action plan entitled "Changing the Relationship" is the GNWT's response to the calls to justice. The GNWT is committed to doing its part to start changing our relationship with all Indigenous peoples, and this draft action plan is an important step in achieving this.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to acknowledge that a high percentage of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people continue to experience various forms of violence, for some daily; and sadly, families are often left to mourn. This has resulted in deep-rooted pain in our northern communities. This action plan is meant to lead policy change and a

whole-of-government approach to programs and services that supports Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people, and the benefits will be felt throughout the communities in the Northwest Territories. Change tends to have a ripple effect. We are counting on that.

Mr. Speaker, the action plan is a living document that is ready for change. We are prepared to work with communities, Indigenous leadership, and other organizations on the initiatives in the action plan. We are ready and open to adapting our approach if what we are actioning is not achieving the intent. This is why we are calling this a living document. Change is not static, relationships are not static, and we will not allow our response to this fundamental issue to be static. The work of relationship building and cultural change takes time and I want to assure Members that we are in it for the long haul.

One of the things we did when reviewing the Calls for Justice was look at similar situations in the Northwest Territories that the Calls for Justice were meant to address. In a lot of cases, there were policy or procedures already in place, along with programs and services, so it became necessary for us to look at these existing programs and services and see if there were ways to improve them. Where we are able to, develop a homegrown response that reflected our northern realities.

Mr. Speaker, this is a three-year plan. This timeline allows us to work on initial implementation but then evaluate and revise the action plan to keep it relevant and responsive. We also need to compliment the implementation of the national action plan that was introduced last spring and take advantage of lessons learned from that process. Three years also means this action plan will carry over into the new government ensuring continuity.

Partnership is an important component of this work. By working in partnership with communities, Indigenous governments and organizations, and special interest groups, we will be developing a network of resources and capacities that will help move these actions forward. This action plan outlines the GNWT's commitment to effecting change. We implore everyone in the Northwest Territories to join in this movement. You may think you do not have a role in changing the relationship but I believe that everyone can have a part, big or small.

Mr. Speaker, I want to note that although proud to have the opportunity to table this work in the House, I am also sad. The weight of the stories I have heard and carried from others, both survivors and perpetrators during the last decade while in various roles, are heartbreaking. It can be almost overwhelming; like no action plan can matter and

that these are only the stories and experiences and not the life of the person who lived through it.

But I also feel hopeful; hopeful that we are moving forward to a time when Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people can begin to feel safe, are valued, and respected.

I have also seen how the different small steps and changes can make a difference especially when made with vision, purpose, and consistency. This action plan is itself a step and holds many more steps that can support Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people to reclaim their place in society on their own terms. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Ministers' statements. Honourable Premier.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 197-19(2): MINISTERS ABSENT FROM THE HOUSE

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise the House that the Honourable Julie Green will be absent from the House for a portion of today's proceedings to participate in a conference call with federal/provincial/territorial ministers of Health.

I also want to advise the House that the Honourable Caroline Wawzonek will also be absent from the House for a portion of today's proceedings to also participate in a conference call with federal/provincial/territorial ministers of Tourism. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INUVIK LONG-TERM CARE FACILITY

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have many of our elders living in the smaller communities of the Beaufort Delta region. In this Assembly, we have seen the plans change the Inuvik long-term care facility. Originally, the building was set to house 48 seniors and now it is down to 16. Mr. Speaker, I support a reduction in the size of this facility as long as this reduction provides enough beds that are required.

As I have heard from elders in my previous roles, they do not want to leave their home community. I do not want to see our elders being sent out of their communities to be housed in a 48-bed facility where they are not with their families, their grandchildren, their language, and their social and

cultural supports. My concern, Mr. Speaker, is how and where are the savings from this change the capital planning is used to support home care services in small communities.

For regional long-term care facilities being reduced in size, how is the government supporting communities to be able to care for elders at home? In all our small communities of not only my region but the Northwest Territories, the nurses on staff are also expected to provide the care for elders in addition to their other duties. There is no designated home care nursing position to support the home support workers, and there's no seven-days-a-week care.

Mr. Speaker, this is one of the most important service to be provided for elders and their families, to ensure that they can age in place with dignity. Because there is not enough home care support and after hours support in small communities, elders have little choice but to relocate to receive better care.

Mr. Speaker, it is this government's priority to support elders to age in place with dignity. We cannot achieve this without an increase in home care nurses and home support workers in the small communities. Increasing home care support in small communities also supports another government priority to increase employment in small communities. I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON STUDENT OUTCOMES

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of the mandates of the 19th Legislative Assembly is to increase student outcomes to the same level as the rest of Canada. This was identified as it was noted that the trend in past and recent graduates in our small communities did not achieve the necessary course requirements to enter post-secondary institutions .

During my Member's statement of November 29th and the question and answer period, the Minister stated that they provide broad strategic direction to education bodies, the district education authorities otherwise known as DEAs. The Minister also stated it is the education bodies themselves who really deliver education to the students.

Mr. Speaker, the auditor general found that the department needs to monitor the education authorities on their compliance with policies and accountability frameworks. I am certain the DEAs are not informed of the policies and frameworks in order to operate as an informed board. I am certain the DEAs are not informed of the new strategies ECE's initiating such as the Education Modernization Act, the education renewal initiatives, and the JK to Grade 12 Curriculum Renewal.

DEAs have elections every three years, and most elected are new members. There is also the odd one or two that will resign in their course of their term. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Education Minister at the appropriate time. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HOUSING

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is for MACA and there are some housing in here too as well. So, Mr. Speaker, Christmas is approaching. Soon we are all going to go home, go our way to be with our families. During the festive seasons, we need to keep in mind the less fortunate, especially those who are homeless, the hungry, the families that are not under one roof because there are no housing options for them.

We all know the Christmas story. Christmas is about the Holy family - Joseph, Mary and Jesus. Mary and Joseph were looking for a place to give birth to their baby Jesus. They were knocking on doors, searching for a place, being chased away, and no one was coming. They found a place to sleep, gave birth to Jesus in a barn, and their baby slept in a manger.

Mr. Speaker, this is similar to the treatment of homeless people in the NWT. Homeless is not just about people on the street. It is about those who are being denied housing or were evicted from social housing. Mr. Speaker, families are denied adequate housing, have no place to sleep, and have no place to call home. As a society, as a government, we need to do more for people.

Christmas is about hope but people who struggle with housing do not have hope. I hear from people they feel helpless; they feel hopeless by the system; they feel trapped. Mr. Speaker, what we are doing to the people is not right. The housing policies and programs in place now are not working. I hear from people they are paying max rent. If they do not provide income tax assessment, their rent dramatically increases.

Mr. Speaker, it is Christmastime. Let's remember the people who are struggling in our communities and hold ourselves accountable to do better. I will have questions for the Minister of MACA and Housing together.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Members' statements. Member for Great Slave.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE
RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the beginning of the 19th Assembly, back in the sunny days prior to Cabinet being selected and COVID chaos, those of us sitting in this Chamber sat down and determined our priorities for the next four years. Those priorities then informed the mandate of Cabinet once they were elected.

One of the priorities set in October 2019 was to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, or UNDRIP, within the constitutional framework of Canada to advance reconciliation. On their website Executive and Indigenous Affairs, or EIA, promises to work with Indigenous governments to create and implement an action plan that identifies changes required in GNWT legislation and policies to best reflect the principles set out in UNDRIP.

Further, on the website it states that EIA will collaborate with the federal government and Indigenous governments to support Canada's efforts to implement UNDRIP.

UNDRIP is a comprehensive statement that addresses the human rights of Indigenous peoples. It took over twenty years to develop and approve and emphasizes the rights of Indigenous peoples to live in dignity; maintain and strengthen their institutions, cultures, and traditions; and pursue their self-determined development in keeping with their own needs and aspirations. The declaration addresses both individual and collective rights; cultural rights and identity; and rights to education, health, employment, and language as well as others.

How is this Assembly working towards these implementing these priorities? Public hearings have been held by the Special Committee on Reconciliation and Indigenous Affairs, and EIA's website promises an implementation plan to be completed by the summer of 2022. The website also states that the "federal process informs the NWT action plan and implementation, including program changes."

I ask, Mr. Speaker, is this government going to wait on the federal government to tell them how to

implement UNDRIP? Or, are they going to have the courage to hold the prime minister's feet to the fire on the promises he made? Will they implement their own if the federal government continues to drag its heels?

When speaking with Indigenous leaders, they tell me that whatever the GNWT does or promises, it must be recognized by Canada And that it is EIA's responsibility to ensure that Canada respects and abides by any commitments made by the GNWT. Otherwise those commitments become lip service and as worthless as the paper they're written on.

Over the last two years I've heard the Premier state several times that she views the relationship with Indigenous governments and the federal government as a triangle with three equal partners. If so, then it is time for the GNWT to step up and stand alongside their partner and push the federal government to do the right thing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
PRIORITIES OF THE 19TH NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. The advice from the Transition Matters special committee of the last Assembly was that there should be fewer priorities. We produced a list of 22 priorities versus the 25 for the 18th Assembly. Hard choices were not made. We ran out of time and energy after an intensive orientation with a looming leadership selection process.

I do not support some of the priorities set by this Assembly. Some work at cross-purposes with each other. Some of the priorities provide precise direction while others are extremely vague. The priorities provide very little direction for the work of some of the departments, agencies and Ministers.

With two years left in this Assembly, it's past the time to review the priorities. I'll make it easy for my Cabinet colleagues. You should focus on only five things in the last two years beyond what your departments are generally doing. Here's my five picks, Mr. Speaker:

1. Develop a costed plan to get our housing out of core need to at least the Canadian average. Take that to Ottawa as the priority for the NWT. Drop the big infrastructure projects now but manage housing like it is a big infrastructure project.

2. The climate crisis. Finally admit it is a crisis, stop blaming the feds, and adopt the international standard of net-zero by 2050. Move beyond the ridiculously low Climate Change Strategic Framework and the misguided 2030 Energy Strategy.
3. Universal childcare. A costed plan to get us there which the last Minister in the 18th Assembly refused to do. No more vague promises of advancing affordable childcare.
4. Settle and implement treaty, land and resources self-government agreements. Concentrate on Akaitcho, the Deh Cho, and the NWT Metis Nation to get final agreements. Provide new mandates and change up our negotiators where necessary.
5. Complete the implementation of the Polytechnic University as the basis for diversifying our economy through recognition of traditional knowledge, environmental remediation, and our world-class environmental management systems.

That's my challenge to Cabinet and to my colleagues on this side of the House. This is the legacy we can and should achieve for our residents. Merci, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY DECISION- MAKING

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of the priorities of the 19th Assembly is to increase regional decision-making authority. That is something that I have always been a strong proponent of. I believe that decentralization of government, wherever possible, is a good thing. In fact, that's what we should be doing. Our government needs to continue to empower the regional centres and small communities with greater autonomy to make their own decisions.

Mr. Speaker, devolution is a well-known concept in this Assembly. On one hand, there is a delegation of powers and responsibilities from the federal level on to the territorial government level. However, on the opposite side of the coin, there's also the further devolution of powers and responsibilities that the Government of the Northwest Territories must continue, which is granting greater autonomy to the regional centres, smaller communities, and Indigenous governments.

Mr. Speaker, our government needs to continue engaging administrative decentralization. We must enable regional centres and small communities with

the ability to make decisions at the local level as much as possible. Far too often have I seen decisions being made from the capital rather than from the communities themselves. That, in my view, is backwards and should be the other way around.

Is a regional approach to decision-making authority not considered the best approach by our government?

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the content within the mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories document could have been stronger than what the government committed to do to improve regional decision-making authority. There is a commitment to ensure that staff have adequate training so they're aware of their decision-making authority; however, that commitment is vague and doesn't grant any further delegation of powers to regional centres, small communities, or Indigenous governments to enhance their regional decision-making authority. I will have questions for the Premier at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Members' statements. Member for Hay River.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MUNICIPAL FUNDING GAP

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the past several years, community governments are finding that they are unable to keep up with the need to provide financial solutions to deal with aging infrastructure, provide services, and cover the increased costs of doing business that would allow the community to grow. We know there's a funding gap of approximately \$37 million with no sense of urgency by this government to seriously address it. We also know that we are looking at around \$69 million annually to renew and replace community infrastructure as it reaches mid- to end-of-life cycles.

Mr. Speaker, this issue has been handed down from one Assembly to another, with no clear sense of when it will be addressed or how to address it. We have communities that are struggling with aging infrastructure and ever increasing costs to conform to evolving and strict legislative requirements that direct how communities deal with climate change, environmental constraints, and development as they move forward.

This government, in its mandate, promised to reduce the funding gap, which is a good start, but what we need to do is to take decisive action to eliminate and start to properly fund communities.

Any funding model not only has to be fair and transparent but has to be built on the reality of the times and not expected to be completely funded by the community.

Mr. Speaker, when I hear this government making statements such as we will "work with communities to identify options to enhance own source revenues and find efficiencies in program and service delivery", I see this as another way of telling communities, financially you're on your own and look to your residents to bail you out. This is not how we should conduct business - the people of the NWT put us here to work for them, to make decisions that will put them in a better place, not a worse one.

Mr. Speaker, this government needs to review, in consultation with each community, where and why costs to sustain our communities are increasing. If we expect communities to flourish and encourage people and businesses to locate there, then we must take swift action to eliminate the funding gap and to fund each community appropriately.

Mr. Speaker, this matter has to be addressed by all four levels of government, including the federal government, the GNWT, Indigenous governments, and community governments. We have to lead with solutions and action. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Mr. Speaker, it is time for this government to do the homework, develop a plan, and meet with the federal government to request financial support to eliminate the funding gap and development a funding arrangement that works for all communities in the NWT. I will have questions for the Minister of MACA at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
PRIORITIES OF THE 19TH NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I empathize with the concern that we had 22 priorities, and that was too many, and the future Assembly should aim to have less. But I am still not convinced that if we had less priorities we would be in a much better situation. I think there is a bit of a bellwether, that we're at our halfway mark and then there's a sense of frustration in this House. Notably, we have been in a global pandemic and steering the GNWT ship is a difficult task and COVID has not made that easier. But, Mr. Speaker, I believe

we have to pick some of those priorities and get them done. And to be honest, Mr. Speaker, I don't really care which it is. It is whatever we think we can accomplish.

If we walked out of that priority room with one to settle and implement land claim agreements, from what I have seen to date I don't believe the GNWT is willing or capable of doing that. If we walked out of one to get our housing out of core need, I don't believe the GNWT is willing or capable of doing that, because I have not seen an appetite to make hard decisions. I have not seen a system in place that allows us to make hard decisions.

Mr. Speaker, in order to accomplish any of our priorities in a meaningful way, we have to make cuts from our budget. We have to go in to departments and we have to remove programs and services, programs and services that people like and that people enjoy, in order to prioritize another priority. That is the reality. There is no way to tax hundreds of millions of dollars out of the people of the NWT. If we want to develop our own priorities, we can't wait for the federal government.

Likely the legacy of this Assembly will be one of internal infighting, Mr. Speaker, unless we do something differently. The other legacy might be getting universal child care but really we can only thank Justin Trudeau for that, Mr. Speaker.

I want to see the next budget not be a status quo budget. I have little faith right now that government renewal will accomplish this. I believe government renewal, at best, is dealing with 1 to 5 percent of the budget and hopefully keeps us just under our debt ceiling. I don't believe there is any efficiency you can find in government without making very tough political decisions about what programs, services, or infrastructure we don't prioritize over others.

Mr. Speaker, that work needs to be done. It needs to be started by our Cabinet colleagues and then we need to have the tough fight to make sure we have some sort of legacy in two years from now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
PRIORITIES OF THE 19TH NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a suggestion as to what that legacy might be.

---Laughter

Twenty-six months ago, we stood in this House and made history - a milestone defined by our gender. While I don't discount the importance of gender equity and representation in leadership, I refuse to have gender define this Assembly's legacy. I want to be defined by my heart, my actions, and my accomplishments.

On our first day I asked for bold change leadership. Bold change requires leaders to be stirred by injustices, willing to advance transformational ideas, and relentless in the hard work to uplift all residents of the Northwest Territories. It requires us to work collaboratively to build a legacy we can be proud of.

The Regular Members of this Assembly have invested more bargaining chips, Member statements, and committee hours on one urgent long standing issue - housing. We have worked hard to collectively acknowledge our housing crisis and have pushed to change this government's role in housing Northerners. We have collaborated to carry the housing conversation and maintain focus.

We have 631 days left to build our housing legacy but it will not engineer itself. To build this, we need tangible change to the Housing Corporation culture through a fresh and appropriate mission, a costed plan to pull the NWT out of core need, public housing legislation, and replace CMHC funding. 631 days is not nearly a countdown to an end, Mr. Speaker, it is a count up to writing the path to our housing legacy.

This legacy will take the continued push from Regular Members, the continued renewable from within the Housing Corporation, and the support of Cabinet. The government's concessions during the 2021 main estimate negotiations and the 90 new public housing units are a good start. But as a government, we spend more on the operations and maintenance on a kilometer of road than an entire capital acquisition plan towards the Housing Corporation. CMHC's national housing strategy is offering more than \$70 billion over 10 years. If this Cabinet wanted to transform housing, the money is available to do this, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in 2019, I believed in our potential for change. I still believe in the great potential of the North and the potential of this Assembly to right a legacy worthy of the respect of the people we serve. But it requires every single one of us to push forward as a team, where people are focused on the outcome and prepared to take a stand. For us to see change in this Assembly, we need to see bold policy and legislative change in 2022. There is potential for creative innovation and our NWT builders want to be part of this legacy, a legacy that delivers on the human right to adequate housing for every Northerner. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MENTAL HEALTH IMPACTS OF COVID-19

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mental health is critical to the well-being of our people. We're going into six weeks of darkness now but we'll get through it because we're resilient Beaufort Delta, that's for sure. We have felt impacts and measures that keep spread of COVID-19 under control. Symptoms like anxiety and depression disorders are said to have increased particularly in my younger adults. I'm concerned, Mr. Speaker, that the riding of Nunakput, there's a lack of mental health support and particularly for women and men and our elders and especially our youth. I'm concerned, Mr. Speaker, that my riding is there, for our youth is a struggle with the results from residential school that we still deal with every day due to the alcoholism. It's not over. The impacts demand our attention, Mr. Speaker. Housing in our small communities are limited. Some homes are overcrowded which adds extra stress, frustration, to lead to mental anguish and addictions, Mr. Speaker.

Sadly, again, with our food security and poverty, it's no stranger to the residents. Pursuing traditional activities and going on the land has become very expensive, Mr. Speaker.

Our communities are small. We have limited resources. We have limited health resources, and the ones we do have are overworked. And I thank them for that, for their service. Our social workers, our doctors, and counsellors are based out of another community, usually in Inuvik, that can make access difficult, because the communities I represent are fly-in communities. Online programs, mental health, first aid, and confidential online chats through the Help Line, Facebook page, are important to Northerners.

Mr. Speaker, our government has to get serious about reconciliation. There needs to be more aggressive, to plan mental health supports for our communities. Reconciliation needs to be planned as action. Increased supports and crisis response, intervene the healing, mental wellness services, and is include culture-language of our elders that we draw upon. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Health Minister later today. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EULOGY FOR ARCHIE KAGLIK

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Archie Steven Reginald Charles Kaglik was born in Aklavik on the 19th of May, 1950, to Mary Kaglik, daughter of Louis and Sarah Kaglik. Archie grew up in the Mackenzie Delta with his mom, brothers, and sisters, along with his aunts and uncles. Archie attended the SAM School, a federal day program, and was a residential school survivor.

While at school, Archie was very involved with the Cadets and gymnastics club. Archie reached the rank of sergeant, and was very proud of this. There are many photos of him with his cousin Frank Gilet who was a senior officer in the Cadet Corps. As for his skills in gymnastics, it was amazing. People spoke about his agility he had, and he could do a back flip from a standstill.

Archie loved being out on the land hunting and just being out there. Spring hunts were always a big event for their family. It was common to have 20-hour hunts and many miles covered, paddling and trying to find the best spot to hunt, geese, ducks in the spring. He loved the challenge to always get the first goose for this birthday. Each spring, he would always get a brand new .22 for the spring hunt of muskrats. He would modify his old .22s for his brothers to use so that they could go hunting.

Archie always took care of his family when they were out at the camp, making sure the family were safe. Archie spent the better part of his life at his grandfather's Louis Kaglik's original trapping area.

Archie met Marilyn and they had a beautiful daughter Natasha. Natasha became Archie's mom's favorite and she would always spoil her. Later on Marilyn was transferred to Fort Simpson and they moved there. Archie was accepted in the community and they made him feel at home for many years before he moved back to Inuvik. However, he made sure he'd come back to visit.

As Natasha grew into adulthood, and started her own family, Archie went down to meet his granddaughter Meagan. Like all grandparents, his life changed forever. He returned to Inuvik and realized that he needed to go back to be with his granddaughter. The birth of Meagan helped him change his lifestyle for the better. He treasured his granddaughter and took great pride in being with her. The family was forever grateful for "baby baby."

Archie passed away on October 22nd, 2021. The family would like to thank the medical staff at Fort Simpson and Stanton for all the support they offered the family and Archie during this difficult time. As well, they would like to thank everybody for helping during this difficult time and their

condolences. He will be sadly missed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nahendeh. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and communities at this time. Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member for Nunakput.

Oral Questions

ORAL QUESTION 875-19(2): MENTAL HEALTH IMPACTS OF COVID-19

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just in regards to our mental health issues that we have in the community, can the Minister provide me with an update of activities that the mental health in the Beaufort Delta is providing for -- will take place in our small communities, including my region in Nunakput; is that there any updates on that? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you for the question. The update that I have is that the community counselling program has resumed face-to-face counselling all across the NWT, including in the Beaufort Delta. This is a very serious issue, the mental health impacts of COVID-19, they're felt throughout the NWT and in fact I think throughout the country and the world. It has certainly been a time of stress and anxiety, as the Member referenced, because there's been so much uncertainty and upheaval in our lives.

So we have the community counselling program which, just to remind the Member, that is a same-day appointment availability. We have the NWT Help Line, and we have a variety of online services for people who have connectivity to that. So I also have a specialized Beaufort Delta mental health supports handout which I will send to the Member for him to use or to post in his community. Thank you.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister for that. I'd just like to know what other culturally-appropriate mental health supports are currently available for Northerners in my riding? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, programs like on-the-land healing camps, we fund the IRC to provide, and they make decisions about how that money is spent and what the focus of the healing camps will be. Other departments also have pots of money which will assist people to get out on the land for various

activities such as trapping and hunting and so on. So there are a variety of supports available. They are, as I say, probably best referenced online to get the complete list or through the IRC which has its own very robust mental health support system. Thank you.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we're really lucky to have IRC that handles the money. But I really think what we should be doing, Mr. Speaker, is giving the communities an opportunity to run their own healing camps, setting up a camp out of the community that we could send our youth and our elders, you know, to get them what services they need and what they're going through. I really think before the next cycle, I guess, of funding that goes through, can the Minister, I guess, commit to talking with IRC chair in regards to providing the community corporations with funding to have their own on-the-land healing camps? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it was my understanding that the money that goes to the IRC annually pays for community camps, but I certainly am happy to speak to the chair of the IRC and talk to him about how that money is being spent and whether there is a need for additional resources at the community level. Thank you.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what is our Minister doing toward a digital mental health programming for the constituents across the North? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we offer a variety of apps, and we're adding more every few months. So we have the Strongest Family Institute, which is primarily for families who need assistance with parenting. We have Wagon, which is an aftercare app for people who are returning from residential treatment or have had some kind of a treatment and they need support. We also have Breathing Room, which is specifically for youth and young adults who are experiencing anxiety and depression. So there are those three, but I understand that there are more.

We recently -- I believe we tabled it here, a report on E-mental health apps and the uptake that they've had. And so I encourage the Member to take a look at that and provide his comments on whether his constituents are using them; and if they aren't, whether they have suggestions about other things that might work better. Thank you.

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

ORAL QUESTION 876-19(2):
REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY DECISION-
MAKING

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of the priorities of the 19th Assembly is to increase regional decision-making authority. In the 2019-2023 Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories document, there's a commitment by the government to train its workforce to ensure they are aware of their decision-making authority.

Can the Premier tell us if there's any other potential commitments were considered in this area by the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs in addressing this mandate item? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned a few weeks previously, we started with looking at the regional decision-making by doing a review of job descriptions, and we found that there was no discrepancy. But we know there's discrepancies. So we have got together with the -- we did a questionnaire with regional senior managers to identify training. They did bring up training. But they also identified other things that were happening as was said; you know, the feelings that there's an unequal balance between headquarters in the regional centres.

So based on that, and recognizing that often it's not really comfortable for people to address management in the government, we hired a private contractor to try to do more work with the regional management to find out what their concerns were. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, within the life of the 19th Assembly, can the Premier tell us if she has received any encouragement from regional centres, small communities, or Indigenous governments to do more than just staff training to promote regional decision-making authority in the NWT? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely, and that's why, like I said, we hired a private contractor. It would be really easy for us to say that we just did the review of the job descriptions, everything's fine, we're giving them extra training. But that's not good enough. And I don't think that's what was wanted when we developed that priority. So that's why it's important that we dig further into this and we find out what are the obstacles. And, like I said, I think it needs to be from an outsider to do that work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, during question period two weeks ago, the Premier mentioned a contractor being hired to go into the communities and ask what was needed to increase regional decision-making authority. Can the Premier elaborate on that statement? Who is the contractor that was hired and what are the terms and length of their contract? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The contractor is D.J. DeLancey Consulting, and the work that that consulting firm would be doing is a planned phased approach. There's three phases. The first one will be one-on-one meetings with senior managers, which has been done. The second phase of the work to be done is facilitated decision-planning meetings, developing the questions that need to be asked. That's taking place early in January I believe. And the third phase is the facilitated discussions and a final report.

So like I said, we don't know what's going to come out of that, but we need to remain open so that when the report comes that we can actually make sure that we address the concerns so that people do feel that they have the right to be able to make decisions at their appropriate level. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again, two weeks ago, the Premier also mentioned a working group being created to help increase regional decision-making authority. Can the Premier elaborate and explain who sits on this working group, how they were chosen, and when is their work expected to be done? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the working group, or planning committee, has ten members, regional and headquarters senior managers. We looked for volunteers to start with and then if we didn't get enough volunteers, we did get people nominated by deputy ministers based on their experience working with both the regions and headquarters and to make sure that we provided a broad representation of the departments that are represented on the regional management committees. I said that they'd be meeting in early in January. It's actually late January, I forget it's Christmas, to develop the approach and the format. And through that, then again they'll be working with it straight throughout to make sure that these are the words of the people and that we look at what we can do going forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 877-19(2):
DISTRICT EDUCATION AUTHORITIES

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my Member's statement made reference to the local education bodies in our communities, the district education authorities, or DEAs as commonly known. There are typically new elections every three years. We could see a whole new slate of elected members.

Can the Minister explain how newly elected DEA members are oriented to their roles as new members? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And so as I've referenced before, the education bodies, the DECs, the DEAs, they have a lot of independence and they really run their own affairs. And so the type of training that is provided is really based on that particular DEA or DEC. So the superintendent would possibly develop some training on governance and then offer it to the new DEAs. The Member points out that there are often new members. There's elections every few years. Sometimes we have members who have been there for 20 years and they can act as a mentor, but quite often we have new members. And one of the issues I see is that the DEAs and DECs have so many responsibilities that it's difficult for someone who's really a volunteer, who's doing just a few hours every week, to really wrap their head around all of that. They have to know the Education Act. They have to know all the regulations in the Education Act. ECE has produced an orientation handbook, but even that is a big book because it's a big responsibility.

So I take the Member's point, and while there is training that ECE can provide, and DEAs can request training, I think there likely needs to be more training for the size of the role. Either that or we have to move ahead with some of the changes that we'd like to make to provide the DEAs and DECs with the authorities that they need and not necessarily all the authorities that one can imagine. I think that would go quite a ways. But I'll leave it at that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. And mahsi to the Minister for that. And I really hope they follow up with those departments through the Divisional Education Councils, that this is a very important step.

Mr. Speaker, it is daunting to say the least to sit on the DEA and not know the direction education is going as one sees the challenges students are having meeting the education levels. Has the department explained or engaged the DEAs as to the challenges students are facing and what the department is doing to address this issue? Mahsi.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And it's a two-way relationship. The DEAs are the ones on the ground, and they often know the challenges students are facing better than anyone. And so I do meet with the education leaders, the chairs of the DEAs and the regional DEC's, and we have those discussions. So I can hear exactly what is happening on the ground.

And for the information flowing the other way, we do reach out and we do explain what ECE is doing. So we've sent out the discussion papers on the Education Act, on the curriculum renewal and all of these initiatives, and we've offered briefings to the DEC's and DEAs to say this is, you know, what we see the issues as being, are we correct; and how can we work together to move forward.

So there is an attempt to get the information flowing both ways. But, again, the way our system is set up, the DEAs and DEC's are very autonomous and ECE is somewhat separate, and it does make for some difficult communication sometimes. But I am working on it, and I think that I have a good relationship with the education bodies, and we try to get that information flowing and keep everyone in the loop. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi to the Minister for that. Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if social passing is introduced in the larger centres, but it is in the small communities. There is growing concern with the social passing system as this does not challenge the students to excel in their studies. It could be described as a system of complacency for both the student and the teacher. I could be totally wrong with this statement and perhaps stand to be corrected. But, it is what I am hearing.

Can the Minister explain how this social passing system came to be and if there any intentions to change this? Mahsi.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And so what the Member's talking about is we wouldn't call it social passing; it's peer placement. So students are placed with their age-related peers. So if you are of a certain age, you would be placed in a certain grade. And if you have different needs, if you perhaps aren't on the same level with certain subjects, the idea is that you would receive lesson plans and the supports you need to catch up to the rest of your peers.

In reality, I think that we realize, we see that's not the way things work. And this approach is used in many, many jurisdictions. It's not just the smaller communities in the Northwest Territories, it's all of the Northwest Territories, and it's a number of different jurisdictions as well. And it is based on research. But I think one of the issues is unless we have those supports to really help the students and bring them up to where they need to be, it's not a system that works effectively.

So there is no requirement for students to get placed in that next grade. It is supposed to be a decision that ultimately the parents make in consultation with the teacher and principal, if necessary, based on their particular child. And that information, I don't think, is readily available. I don't think people realize that they have the right to have their children held back if they think that's necessary. And so, you know, I recognize at the beginning of this Assembly and we have been working on getting that information out there and so we're developing some materials I believe early in the upcoming year, those will be available, and it will hopefully better explain this and it will inform parents about what our system is and how it works, and that they have that power to make those changes if they need. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker, and mahsi to the Minister for his reply.

When ECE develops new initiatives like the Education Modernization Act, the JK to Grade 12 Renewal, I'm often left wondering if the DEA members have a grasp on these initiatives in order to make informed decisions on behalf of the community, the teachers, and the students. I often wonder if the DEAs are given any information regarding the findings of the auditor general.

Can the Minister direct all divisional education councils to initiate workshops for the DEAs on all current initiatives and all new initiatives, including the auditor general's reports? Mahsi.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And we do share all of that information with the education bodies. ECE will share it with the regional DEC, and they then distribute that to the DEAs. And we have offered information sessions on all of those initiatives, because we want everyone to be on the same page and know what's going on. So I can't really direct the DEC's to do things like that. It's not my role. But I would be happy to share that information and provide those types of briefings if they are requested, because if everyone knows what's going on it's beneficial to everyone.

I will say, though, that we have a lot of initiatives going on, and I'm sure the Member has been in many, many hours of briefings on those initiatives. And so it is a big commitment of time, and it's tough to get the DEA members who are -- you know, they have families, they're generally parents; they don't have a lot of free time to sit through hours and hours and hours of briefing on those things. But I'm always encouraging it, and we're always very open to doing that. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 878-19(2):
UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE
RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Premier. Can the Premier explain to me how the GNWT is moving forward on implementing UNDRIP in spite of noncommittal federal direction and little action? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Honourable Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, I would think that that priority is actually going along quite well. I've said since the beginning that the biggest thing within the United Nations Declaration is it's about Indigenous people and Indigenous people should take the lead.

We also have a special committee from the Speaker's Committee that has Members of Cabinet and the Regular Members. The chair of that comes to our meetings with Indigenous governments. And the Member did say that I have often referred to the relationship with Indigenous governments and the federal government in a triangle. I don't believe I would have used "triangle." It's three-headed and it can turn and it's always got a top. I would say it more as an equal partnership is what I've always used, or even a circle, that we all have equality within that.

So we've done a lot. The Indigenous governments didn't wait. I know that the special committee would have loved to have been able to give more direction, but the Indigenous governments knew it was theirs.

So we formed three tables. We always had the Intergovernment's table. We now have the Council of Leaders table. Every Indigenous government's part of that. That committee has a working group. Every Indigenous government has representation on that working group. The GNWT is one member of that working group. They are moving forward with developing legislation, developing. But they

have said it's not on this time of this Legislative Assembly; it's on their time. And they've also said, as the Member alluded to, is that what's the use of legislation if things don't change. So I've heard that clearly, and there's much work going on. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to go check Hansard because I'm pretty sure I've heard triangle somewhere there before.

I'm glad to hear that things are moving forward, and I will give the Premier kudos that I have heard from Indigenous leaders they do feel that there is a lot more discussion happening than there has been in the past.

My question is around last session I was asking about the investigations into the graves of the residential schools, and the Premier indicated that that work needed to be led by Indigenous governments and organizations, which I agree with. So could the Premier provide some details on where that work is at with Indigenous organizations and governments, and when we could expect to see some of that work starting? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if that's on the same line of questioning as the United Nations Declaration but I will say that I have put my name out there and said to the Indigenous governments that I will stand by them on what their definition -- what they want to do with that.

My understanding is that the Dene Nation is taking the lead on that and, again, we're willing to stand behind them and work with them as they see fit. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I won't argue with the Premier why I think that's important for UNDRIP, but I would imagine that others could probably provide some information on that.

What funding has the GNWT identified or committed to spending towards the implementation of UNDRIP? If the GNWT is committed to making missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls a priority, why has no funding been dedicated? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wouldn't say that no money hasn't been allocated. We haven't defined what it would be yet; they're still looking at it. But we have spent money internally. We have the Indigenous Council of Leaders that meets regularly. We pay for all of those leaders to come into the capital and we pay for their accommodations; we pay for their expenses to be able to take part in those meetings. So at this point other than, like I said, they're looking at co-developing legislation for the United

Nations Declaration. Until that's done, we haven't identified any extra money that we need other than getting them together in the workshops and the groups that we're doing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Final supplementary, Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The point of dedicated funding is that it's actually set aside for that priority, and so I guess my point being is I'd like to see a pot that's actually for that work.

Moving on, the timeline on their website says that an implementation plan will be completed in the summer of 2022. Does that mean that nothing is going to be done any further until that time? Are we going to be waiting for another year to see action happening? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do need to make sure that the Indigenous governments know that I'm standing up for them and that I do not believe that nothing has happened. I believe that a lot of work has happened on that initiative. Other than the Mineral Resources Act, this is the first time that we are working together strong, meeting regularly to co-developing a legislative act with them. And this is the first time, in the history of the territorial government, that we brought all the leaders together as the Council of Leaders to be able to do this work. So I would say a lot has happened, and we will continue to move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 879-19(2):
EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. I will have questions for Housing on a later date. So, okay, Mr. Speaker, Christmas is a time of joy but many people are struggling economically. Every person deserves food, shelter, and act of kindness during this Christmas season, and MACA provides funding to the communities. And in this one, it's up to the other departments if they feel generous, they can chip in as well, hey.

So first question: Can the Minister identify if there are any provisions in MACA funding for communities that support emergency housing solutions?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, communities can make a decision on how they spend their money. They get

money from the government, and then they develop a budget. Some communities have set aside for emergency operations. Some have set up for special projects; i.e., it could be housing; it could be sports; it could be however they donate however they feel fit. So, again, the community has that opportunity to budget for it and move forward on it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Can the Minister commit to working with partners in communities to ensure vulnerable homes are provided food hampers during the holiday season? Thank you.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you. That's a loaded question. I wish I could say yes, but right now it's not within our bailiwick. We don't do those things. But we would encourage the municipal governments to work with that, work with the Indigenous governments, to be able to do those things. I know in some of the communities; i.e., the one community I live in, the friendship centre, the village, the band, the Metis, get together and provide these food baskets and people donate to them that way. So they do that right now. I don't think that's a Department of Municipal and Community Affairs directive but we're willing to encourage municipal government and aboriginal governments to do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Can the Minister support communities to purchase food hampers and emergency clothing for cold weather?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you. I have to give the Member her tenacity; she's very passionate about this.

We do give budgets to the municipalities. They can allocate money for those type of activities should they wish. Again, I do not want to be the one telling them what to do. I would encourage them to help. I know, like I say, in the community that I live in, again the three areas, whether it's the band, the Metis, or the village, they work together. And then in some of the other communities, the band does that. So I would encourage communities to work and help our less fortunate people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 880-19(2):
MUNICIPAL FUNDING GAP

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I got another Member's statement here. Not really, but I guess what I want to talk

about is -- and the questions will go to the Minister of MACA -- is about reducing the funding gap.

You know, when I look at that, that's one area, that's one priority we could actually solve and wipe off his books, off the books, because it's a monetary solution to that. And, you know, we have to set the bar high. You know, we look at it and we say we're going to reduce it, but I think we can eliminate it. And, you know, the communities are the backbone of the NWT. We have to make them strong. They're run basically by volunteers, and the cost of doing business is increasing. And, you know, if we're going to grow the North, we need to support the communities.

So the first question I have for the Minister of MACA is, will the Minister confirm when the last review of the community government funding policy took place and what were the criteria used for that review? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister responsible for MACA.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, and I thank the Member for starting a Member's statement. I can do a Minister's statement on this, actually, and speak long on it.

So in 2014, MACA and NWTAC actually met and started working on it. So the group that was involved, it was political and this administration with the department and from the communities and NWTAC. Some of the things that they focused on was, you know, government funding, including flexible funding arrangements, community governments' accountability, responsibilities, changing community needs, regional roles of some communities, ability of small populations to generate revenue, and linkage between infrastructure costs and operation costs. And as well, we at the regional level work with the municipalities and we also try to work with them about the facilities and infrastructure they build on. So we work with them that way. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'd like to ask the Minister to confirm what the dollar value of the current community funding gap is and what would be required annually to renew and replace community infrastructure as it reaches mid- and end-life cycles? Thank you.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the 2021-2022, it's basically approximately \$36 million. So the second part of the question is what will it cost. Over \$3 billion in investment in their infrastructure, which is basically not \$5 million but it's going to cost them \$70 million a year to replace it. So when the

Member says, well, we can achieve that, it's not that easy to achieve, to find \$70 million. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I actually disagree with the Minister and that comment. I think that, you know, like I said, we got to raise the bar high. We have to figure out where the money is and one of the places we can get it, and the only place, is really the federal government. And nowhere do I see anything about addressing it by going with a plan to the federal government.

So my next question for the Minister is will the Minister confirm, going forward, what is the department's plan to not only reduce but to eliminate this gap, and will the Minister provide a realistic timeline to accomplish it? Thank you.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are updating the funding policy to incorporate recommendations from the review. The work is being planned and will be completed by 2023. MACA continues to seek funding during the annual business plans that reduce the gap and adjust for inflation at all levels. And the Member talked about it. It's all levels. Whether it's federal, territorial, or municipal, we have a role to address this.

As well, the department is always looking for solutions to help reduce municipal costs. And when the Member talks about the, you know, federal government, as soon as the federal government comes out with a new program, our department and our staff are reaching out to the federal government to ask them how we can actually get into this program to help us, municipal communities, improve their infrastructure.

One of the problems is it's only one-time funding; it's not ongoing basis. So sometimes the federal government is only able to give us a program that's earmarked for a certain amount of years. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the federal government, because of the pandemic, opened the door to stimulus funding. Once that money's gone, that door's going to be closed, and we're not going to have an opportunity to go back for a while. So, you know, I think it's important that this government sits down, comes up with a real plan to go and request the funds to get rid of this gap. Because like I said, the communities are the backbone of the Northwest Territories. Without them, we wouldn't be here.

So, Mr. Speaker, will the Minister confirm what, if any, requests have been made to the federal government for financial support to eliminate the current funding gap? If not, when can we expect something like that to take place? Thank you.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I couldn't agree more that the communities are our backbone. I totally agree with it. I spent 23 plus years with the department, that kind of aged me, and I understand the importance of it. And I understand the department, and I've seen the work that my colleagues and now the department has been doing.

So as the Member said, the federal government has been an important partner in municipal funding infrastructure.

The gas tax agreement provides \$17 million annually on a permanent basis. \$17 million. Could we get it more? Yes, we reach out to them all the time for that. The clean water and wastewater funds provided was \$52 million from 2016 to 2023 for the communities to make improvements to their infrastructure.

The GNWT has been working closely with our federal counterparts on their current Investing in Canada Plan to ensure that it is responsive to community needs. The program provides \$117 million over the term of 2018 to 2028 for a variety of municipal infrastructure purposes.

And we are working with the federal government, we're talking with them, and I've introduced myself to the new federal Minister as well. And we'll be having those conversations. We want to be able to help move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 881-19(2):
HOUSING

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in June of 2021, this House passed a housing motion called Action for Improved Housing Outcomes. On November 22nd, the government's response was tabled in this House. But the government's response wasn't any different than the answers I generally get from the Minister anyway. It didn't have any specific change or timelines associated with it.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if the Minister of Housing can let us know, or let this House know, when the Standing Committee on Social Development can expect to see a draft of the revised motion for the Housing Corporation? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister responsible for Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Housing Corporation anticipates that the revised mission and value statement will be available during the February sitting of the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for that. I can say that the Standing Committee on Social Development is very much looking forward to that document and being able to hopefully participate in some feedback from especially small community members that sit on that committee.

My second question, Mr. Speaker, is when the Housing Corporation joined us for the Committee of the Whole review of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation capital estimates, the deputy minister committed to bringing together information to address the end to core need in the Northwest Territories.

So I'm wondering if there is a timeline for that one as to when Standing Committee on Social Development can expect to see some kind of a draft plan to end the housing core need in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member, and thank you to the standing committee as well, too, that housing is the number 1 priority of this government, and I appreciate the work that's done by the Members as well too.

The Housing Corporation has listened to all conversations during our committee review of the capital estimates and identified additional analysis that they must do to present the comprehensive plan to the committee as requested. The corporation anticipates to have this work done and ready and presented to the committee prior to February sitting of the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. CLEVELAND: I'm starting to feel like it's my birthday, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister just said something pretty amazing. She said that housing is the number 1 priority of this government, and I think that's a pretty incredible statement and one that I hope that I can capitalize on for my third question.

So I'm wondering, Mr. Speaker, has the NWT Housing Corporation asked the GNWT to replace the lost CMHC funding for O and M; and if so, why is Cabinet expecting these lost federal funds to be

found internally if this is their number 1 priority? Thank you.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Housing Corporation has had this funding decline on the radar with both the GNWT and conversations with Canada, and has continuously engaged on this issue since the declining began in 2003. There have been some contributions from the GNWT but those have not countered the full impact of the declining funding.

The Housing Corporation has also developed some mitigation measures that are set out in the Housing Corporation's business plan and main estimates. The conversations continue as part of both the federal engagement and the internal process for the annual business planning cycle. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. So over the course of the last 18 years then, we've been slowly watching a decline happen, but there hasn't been a response then from the GNWT to actually address what we now understand to be -- and quite thankfully, I'm going use this one probably quite a bit -- the number 1 priority of this government. And I might get a talking to from some Ministers after that, but I'm going to run with it.

Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if the NWT Housing Corporation intends to bring forward new legislation specific to public housing, because right now the NWT Housing Corporation's legislation speaks largely to the corporation's ability to be a corporation, to borrow money, and to spend money, or to lend money. But it doesn't speak to the Housing Corporation's responsibility to keep Northerners housed as housing is a human right.

And so I'm wondering if the Housing Corporation will make a commitment to bring forward a legislative proposal in the life of this Assembly for public housing? Thank you.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As part of the renewal strategy, the Housing Corporation anticipates a comprehensive look at the Housing Corporation's role and relationships with the partners to addressing housing in the territory. Coming out of that conversation, we anticipate being able to identify what legislative changes may be necessary moving forward. The renewal strategy identifies the changes to legislation but would be identified as part of the current work. But that, the legislation proposal and advancing the legislation, would be advanced in the next Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 882-19(2):
FUTURE OF PRINCE OF WALES NORTHERN
HERITAGE CENTRE

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. In my June 4th, 2021, statement, I noted the old name of the museum here in Yellowknife. I've been raising this issue now for about six years in this House. I don't understand why we just don't change the name to something that embraces reconciliation and our northern reality.

Can the Minister tell us why the name of the museum has not been changed and what the obstacles are to moving forward with a name that reflects our northern realities? Merci, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We can't just change the name, as the Member says. And I think that if I would have started the process of changing the name on my first day in this position, it still wouldn't be changed because there has to be an extensive consultation process. I would not unilaterally change the name to something I thought was appropriate. There would have to be extensive consultation with Indigenous governments and the public.

The process of renaming the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre is definitely on the radar. It is something that we are looking into. And it is being packaged together with some of the other work that's being done. We are looking at some big changes for the museum.

The Member knows very well that the building itself is in need of repair. It's in need of expansion for certain areas. And we are looking at the governing structure of the museum. And so I wouldn't want to go and just change the name outside of all of those as well. I think that we really need to look at this holistically and move forward in a way that makes sense. But it is something that is being worked on. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. I've seen so many documents calling for renovations or a new facility that it isn't even funny anymore. Some of us have visited the museum and seen the problems firsthand. If our government actually made culture and heritage our higher priority, I think we would

have had a new museum by now. And that's exactly what the Yukon did, Mr. Speaker.

Does the Minister have a renovation or upgrade plan to address the museum's practical needs that he's going to bring forward for funding approval or when will such a plan be presented? Merci, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If this government, as the Member said, made culture and heritage a higher priority it doesn't mean that we would have a new museum; it might mean that we have more resources in communities. Making something a higher priority for the territory isn't synonymous with making something a higher priority in Yellowknife. So there are people outside of Yellowknife who we want to be able to access culture and heritage resources as well. So this is not the only culture and heritage resource in the territory.

That being said, it is a very valuable one, and it does more than display artifacts. You know, children go there to learn. It houses the archives. And as the Member said, there have been a number of different documents stating that something needs to be done.

And when I first came into office, there was a building study that was nearing completion, and that was completed in 2020. We went back and said what other options can we look at, because while we would like the Cadillac of museums, we really need to be realistic here. So that work is being done, and we are looking at it in consultation or at the same time as this revenue study and the governance study which is sort of hand-in-hand with that.

So all that to say that the Member will be the first to know when I come across new information. I will call him personally because I know how passionate he is about this. And I expect that to happen early in the new year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. I look forward to a call on New Year's Day from him, a personal call. But, yes, look, we can do a lot more on heritage.

You know, I've mentioned that there's a revenue review underway, and I'm just not sure that it's actually going to result in any significant new funding. You know, I think the much more likely route for us to get more funding is go to the federal government and build on COVID relief or a tourism product development.

Can the Minister tell us the status of this revenue review and whether there's any likelihood of raising enough money to fix up the museum? Merci, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The revenue review will be completed by the end of this fiscal year.

The Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre is unique. Most museums aren't 100 percent funded by a province or territory. It's generally run by a third party who can then access federal funding. There is not a big pot of money that the GNWT can access to just build a new museum. But that being said, if we look at other ways to operate the museum perhaps we can find some of that funding. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. And I'm really happy to try to help him get the money but I'm sure that he can work more closely with his Cabinet colleagues. But I'm still just not convinced that culture and heritage gets all the attention it deserves, especially when it comes to federal relations and opportunities.

Can the Minister describe the department's recent attempts to secure federal funding for culture and heritage and how this relates to our efforts to towards reconciliation; and, more specifically, what this means for the museum? Merci, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've had a number of conversations with Minister Guilbeault when he was in the role of Canadian Heritage but he's no longer there, and so I have to build a new relationship with the new Minister. And that was typically around the COVID-related funding.

As for funding specifically for the museum, there is money through Canadian Heritage through the museum assistance program, I believe it's called, and they have funding for discrete projects, so minor upgrades, exhibits, things like that. And we have been successful in getting some of those funds.

That funding is something that doesn't flow through us. So any organization in the territory, any Indigenous government who would want that, would have to apply directly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for the Status of Women.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 529-19(2):
CHANGING THE RELATIONSHIP: DRAFT
ACTION PLAN IN RESPONSE TO THE CALLS
FOR JUSTICE ON MISSING AND MURDERED
INDIGENOUS WOMEN, GIRLS AND
2SLGBTQQIA+ PEOPLE

TABLED DOCUMENT 530-19(2):
GRANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS RESULTS
REPORT 2020-2021

TABLED DOCUMENT 531-19(2):
NORTHERN MINERAL SECTOR INVESTMENT
STUDY FINAL REPORT, AUGUST 2021

TABLED DOCUMENT 532-19(2):
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS 2020-2021 - SECTIONS I, II,
III AND IV

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following four documents: Changing the Relationship: Draft Action Plan in Response to the Calls for Justice on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples; Grants and Contribution Results Report 2020-2021; Northern Mineral Sector Investment Study Final Report, August 2021; and, Public Accounts 2020-2021, Sections I, II, III and IV. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Government House Leader.

TABLED DOCUMENT 533-19(2):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ON THE LAND
COLLABORATIVE 2021 REPORT

TABLED DOCUMENT 534-19(2):
WHAT WE HEARD: 2021 ANTI-POVERTY
ROUNDTABLE

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: Northwest Territories On the Land Collaborative 2021 Report; and, What We Heard 2021 Anti-Poverty Roundtable. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Government House Leader. Tabling of documents. Member for Frame Lake.

TABLED DOCUMENT 535-19(2):
MOTION 4-83(2): TESTING OF CRUISE MISSILE
IN CANADA - EXCERPTS FROM HANSARD
DATED SEPTEMBER 2, 1983

TABLED DOCUMENT 536-19(2):
MOTION 15-86(1): CRUISE MISSILE TESTING
OPPOSITION – EXCERPTS FROM HANSARD
DATED MARCH 5, 1986

TABLED DOCUMENT 537-19(2):
MOTION 11-89(2): LOW LEVEL FLIGHTS IN
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES – EXCERPTS
FROM HANSARD DATED NOVEMBER 1, 1989

TABLED DOCUMENT 538-19(2):
MOTION 20-12(5): CONDEMNATION OF
CONTINUATION OF CRUISE MISSILE TESTING
– EXCERPTS FROM HANSARD DATED MARCH
2, 1994

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I wish to table the following four documents entitled Motion 4-83(2): Testing of Cruise Missile in Canada - Excerpts from Hansard dated September 2nd, 1983; Motion 15-86(1): Cruise Missile Testing Opposition - Excerpts from Hansard dated March 5th, 1986; Motion 11-89(2): Low Level Flights in the Northwest Territories - Excerpts from Hansard dated November 1st, 1989; and Motion 20-12(5): Condemnation of the Continuation of Cruise Missile Testing - Excerpts from Hansard March 2, 1994. Merci, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Minister responsible for Finance.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 45:
APPROPRIATION ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE
EXPENDITURES) 2022-2023,
CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Range Lake, that Bill 45: Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures) 2022-2023, be read for the first time.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Motion is in order and is non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 45 has had first reading.

First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Minister responsible for Finance.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 45:
 APPROPRIATION ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE
 EXPENDITURES) 2022-2023,
 CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Range Lake, that Bill 45: Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures) 2022-2023, be read for the second time.

This bill authorizes the Government of the Northwest Territories to make appropriations for infrastructure expenditures for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Motion is in order. To the principle of the bill?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Bill 45 has had second reading.

Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Bill 23, Bill 29, Committee Report 21-19(2), Committee Report 23-19(2), with Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes in the chair.

Consideration of Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of committee? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Committee would like to consider Tabled Document 437-19(2), Capital Estimates 2022-2023; Committee Report 22-19(2), Report on Telecommunications; Committee Report 20-19(2), Report on Bill 30, an Act to Amend the Aurora College Act; and Bill 30, an Act to Amend the Aurora College Act. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I will now call Committee of the Whole back to order. Committee, we've agreed to consider Committee Report 22-19(2): Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment, Report on Government of the Northwest Territories Approach to the Mining Fiscal Regime Review. I will go to the chair of the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment for any opening comments. Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. The committee's report was read into the record on November 30th, 2021 so I do not have any additional substantive comments to add to this at this time. Individual Members may have comments on the report, brief comments on this report. And I'd like to thank committee for their work and our staff on this report. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. I will now open the floor to general comments on the Committee Report 21-19(2): Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment Report on Government of the Northwest Territories Approach to the Mining Fiscal Regime. Comments? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci.. Our government inherited a mining fiscal regime from the federal government at devolution. That regime has never been through a thorough public review. Why is this important now?

Government revenues from mining have accounted for a significant portion of our spending, particularly since devolution. Exactly how much remains to be seen due to a lack of transparency but these funds do help support our programs and services such as housing, education and health care. It is very important that our government gets a fair share for this one-time natural capital, and that it is shared with Indigenous governments. We need to maximize the benefits from mining just as we are trying to do with procurement.

In terms of the mining fiscal regime review, the most relevant point from the priorities of the 19th Assembly that we developed together back in November 2019 is the following: "Adopt a benefit retention approach to economic development."

In no way did committee contravene the priorities or mandate of the 19th Assembly in conducting the work that went into this report. We are simply carrying out our oversight role on the department and the mining fiscal regime review.

We have a duty to maximize benefits from the development of mineral resources. Our job as MLAs is to try to find the right balance between competing rights and interests to maximize those benefits, including revenues to public government

in the form of royalties and taxes, profits to shareholders, jobs and contracts from resource development, and the distribution of benefits within the Northwest Territories and across generations. This is exactly what we are trying to do with the procurement review and should be doing the same with the review of the mining fiscal regime. These are political decisions that require access to information and careful analysis and should not be left to the public service or negotiated behind closed doors.

The Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment launched the mining regime fiscal review in October 2020 and stated that the "re-imagining of our government's fiscal framework around royalties is one that deserves a comprehensive, collaborative, multi-phased approach." ITI commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to prepare a benchmark study including developing recommendations addressing mineral royalties, taxes, and direct and indirect economic returns.

The core finding of the PwC study was that "lowering taxes is unlikely to be effective for the Northwest Territories" because the government take, the share of after-cost revenues flowing to the government as compared to the company is already very low. In terms of the fair return assessment, PwC concluded that "the Northwest Territories' tax regime is in line with other jurisdictions in Canada, and thus receiving a fair return."

Given the importance of the mining sector, the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment sought a review of the PwC report and an economic analysis on the NWT's proposed fiscal and regulatory mining regime review.

Committee retained resources for development consulting. It was founded in 2011 with a mandate to assist governments and communities in securing a fair share of mineral and petroleum wealth. The company assists:

- in the design of fiscal regimes;
- the negotiation and renegotiation of contracts;
- the forecasting of future government revenues; and,
- the monitoring and auditing of production, sales, and project costs to secure government revenues in practice.

The resources for development team members included the principal of the firm, who is a specialist in the economic analysis of petroleum and mining projects in more than twenty countries, including advice to First Nations communities in Canada in negotiating revenue sharing agreements for major

projects. He was a member of the executive group in the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and an associate professor of public and international affairs at the University of Ottawa. He holds a PhD from the University of Cambridge.

Other team members included a former executive with over 30 years' experience in the mining industry and another expert with over 25 years of experience in the energy and natural resources sectors assisting over 20 countries.

Resources for development found the PwC study was specifically designed to assess competitiveness, not maximizing government revenues. The jurisdictions selected generate the impression that the NWT tax regime is only slightly more generous than most other jurisdictions. Government revenues from mining in Canada fall far below the international average. The NWT fiscal regime results "in some of the lowest "government take" in the world for minerals."

The PwC study did not assess the relative contribution, the strengths and weaknesses, or the appropriateness for the NWT of the existing royalty and corporate income taxes. There was no assessment of the historical performance of the NWT mining fiscal regime.

The PwC study conflates revenues to be paid to the federal government with revenues to be paid to the GNWT. Analysis of the potential revenues from mining must also include an analysis of the net revenues that could be expected to remain in the NWT after considering the territorial formula funding clawback.

Committee's consultant found that after-cost share of mining revenues to the government is around 36 percent, with 22 percent for the NWT and 14 percent for the federal government. The International Monetary Fund says that a government should expect 40 to 60 percent from a mining project. The consultant also found that one-quarter of potential government mining revenues could fail to materialize due to factors that are commonly found in the mining sector elsewhere in Canada.

Committee posed a number of questions to the consultant and the responses the consultant follow:

Question 1: Is the GNWT maximizing benefits from resource extraction?

The share of after-cost mining revenues that flows to the government and to the GNWT falls well below what could reasonably be expected. Only by selecting multiple American and Canadian jurisdictions known to have among the lowest government take in the world does the NWT appear well situated.

Question 2: Does the GNWT fiscal and regulatory structure maximize value for NWT residents and future generations?

The NWT mining fiscal regime does not appear to be well designed to maximize government revenues. The government take is low and there is a strong likelihood that government revenues will come later in the project lifecycle, and there are significant risks in the way the royalty system is designed.

Question 3: Is the proposed approach by the GNWT to review the fiscal and regulatory regime comprehensive?

The PwC study was designed to answer only one of the many questions that should be part of a mining fiscal regime review. There should be a comprehensive review of historic payments to governments from the diamond mines, a full revenue analysis from the perspective of the GNWT, and an assessment of the net benefits that would be retained by the Northwest Territories under the territorial formula funding clawback.

Question 4: Will the proposed approach accurately assess whether the benefits of resource wealth are being maximized for the GNWT, NWT residents, and future generations?

Additional analysis is required to accurately assess whether the benefits of resource wealth are being maximized for the GNWT, for current NWT residents, and for future generations.

I will not review the recommendations of the consultant but note that committee adopted them and each one will be discussed as a motion.

It is my understanding that ITI is already working on many of these matters. I and others have been calling on the Minister for some time to publicly present all the steps, a timeline, and opportunities for engagement in the mining fiscal regime review. It's also not clear what topics are going to be covered in any regulations meant to implement the Mineral Resources Act in an overall implementation plan.

The committee took its role to date in the mining fiscal regime review very seriously. We secured world-class independent expertise and now offer our recommendations to ensure that there is an informed and public process to balance a number of competing interests including

- maximizing benefits;
- industry competitiveness;
- shareholder profits;

- intergenerational equity; and,
- revenues to Indigenous governments.

In conclusion, I thank the committee for its work and look forward to more opportunities to discuss the mining fiscal regime review, greater transparency around resource revenues, and benefit retention. Merci, Madam Speaker.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Any other comments? Seeing no further comments, Mr. Jacobson.

COMMITTEE MOTION 177-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 22-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND ENVIRONMENT REPORT ON THE
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES APPROACH TO THE MINING
FISCAL REGIME – ANALYSIS OF
PERFORMANCE OF MINING FISCAL REGIME,
CARRIED

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories analyze performance of the Northwest Territories mining fiscal regime since devolution and published these results. Thank you, 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? Abstentions? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Member for Nunakput.

COMMITTEE MOTION 178-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 22-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND ENVIRONMENT REPORT ON THE
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES APPROACH TO THE MINING
FISCAL REGIME – GOVERNMENT-LED
REVENUE TRANSPARENCY,
CARRIED

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories implement government-led revenue transparency. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

---Carried

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

Member for Nunakput.

---Carried

Member for Nunakput.

COMMITTEE MOTION 179-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 22-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND ENVIRONMENT REPORT ON THE
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES APPROACH TO THE MINING
FISCAL REGIME – MAXIMIZING GOVERNMENT
REVENUE,
CARRIED

COMMITTEE MOTION 181-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 22-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND ENVIRONMENT REPORT ON THE
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES APPROACH TO THE MINING
FISCAL REGIME – MINING REVENUES TO
BENEFIT FUTURE GENERATIONS,
CARRIED

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move the committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories conduct fiscal regime review focused on maximizing government revenue. Thank you, Madam Chair.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories generate greater mining revenues to benefit the future generations. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Just briefly, I checked the heritage fund balance, and it's predicted to be \$27 million at the end of 2020-2021. And I calculated the value of the diamonds that have been exported from the Northwest Territories since diamond production began, and it's about \$35 billion.

---Carried

Member for Nunakput.

COMMITTEE MOTION 180-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 22-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND ENVIRONMENT REPORT ON THE
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES APPROACH TO THE MINING
FISCAL REGIME – ANALYSIS OF NET REVENUE
BENEFITS,
CARRIED

I know we got a late start on the heritage fund, and the heritage fund is something that's going to be reviewed hopefully during the life of this Assembly, but I think we kind of need to do better for our future generations. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories analyze the net revenue benefits for the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

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

---Carried

Member for Nunakput.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

COMMITTEE MOTION 182-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 22-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND ENVIRONMENT REPORT ON THE
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES APPROACH TO THE MINING
FISCAL REGIME – INDIGENOUS
GOVERNMENTS' ECONOMIC BENEFIT
SHARING,
CARRIED

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee recommends that the

Government of the Northwest Territories expand Indigenous governments' economic benefit sharing. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes, just briefly, I do want to acknowledge that the Mineral Resources Act when it was being developed there are provisions now in the act for benefit agreements to be negotiated prior to production licences. I think that was a good thing to do. I think there's still some details to be worked out in that regard. But I think that was a good start in acknowledging that there's a need to share greater benefits with Indigenous governments from mining. Yes, thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion? Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: I just want to make a comment on his comment. In that benefit agreements to Indigenous governments, the money comes, the money goes. I think that the only way to go in future with any kind of industry, especially large industry like mining or anything else, they have to have ownership. Indigenous governments should have ownership in the projects. So I just want to make that comment. And you know what, we have to -- I know there was the comments made by -- and I know he's very -- you know, I respect his views, although I don't always agree with them, and I respect anybody in this House views. We are all very -- what we believe in, we try to express on the floor of the House. And I'm very much about making sure that the mining industry survives. I want to make sure that the mining industry is -- that we're open for business, and I want to make sure that we all have jobs in the future, especially there's a lot of jobs that are -- like, even in my community, many of the people out of Fort Smith work at the mines. And I don't want to make things more difficult because sometimes, you know, too many rules and too many of everything -- and government likes to do that. Too much paper. Too much everything. And there's better ways of doing things in business. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. The consultant pointed out that we are doing some things in this area, but we actually have a lot of room to expand into making sure that, as MLA Martselos noted, that Indigenous-owned corporations and their governments, you know, take equity stakes in mines. I think it's pretty clear that some of our dev corps are doing much better than

others and have really built, you know, wealth and experience off of mining. But there's a lot to learn. I think a great jurisdiction to turn to is Alaska.

If you go to Alaska, nine out of the ten largest owned corporations are Indigenous-owned corporations. They have really took their dev corps to a whole other scale. And I think you're going to get a long way down the list of companies operating in the NWT before you even find a local one let alone an Indigenous one. It is clear that no one in the NWT is operating on the scale of the companies currently running our mines. And I think a future world to envision in the mining world is that, you know, instead of it maybe being Rio Tinto or De Beers, it's actually an Indigenous-owned company that owns that mine. I don't think that is an outrageous dream and it is something that I hope that this mining fiscal regime can look to. I know that gets into IBAs, and I know that gets into the confidentiality of what is actually currently being paid out, but I think there is probably a lot of room to grow in this area. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): To the motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Member for Nunakput.

COMMITTEE MOTION 183-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 22-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND ENVIRONMENT REPORT ON THE
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES APPROACH TO THE MINING
FISCAL REGIME --PUBLIC INFORMATION AND
ENGAGEMENT,
CARRIED

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories make it public, as soon as possible, information on the steps, timeline, and the opportunities for public engagement for the review of the mining fiscal regime. 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, I just want to encourage that the department does get out some more information about what the next steps are. There was the PricewaterhouseCooper's study done in -- that was publicly released in October of

2020, and I understand there's some more work in progress. But what those next steps are and the timeline for them and how that's going to relate to regulation development, whether the regulations are going to cover a variety of topics like map staking, transparency, that's just not clear at all. And so I want to encourage the department, the Minister, to put out that roadmap so that it's available to everybody. 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? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Member for Nunakput.

COMMITTEE MOTION 184-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 22-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND ENVIRONMENT REPORT ON THE
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES APPROACH TO THE MINING
FISCAL REGIME – GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
TO RECOMMENDATIONS,
CARRIED

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee recommends the government provide a response to the recommendations contained in this report within 120 days. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): 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? All those abstaining? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Thank you, committee. Do you agree that you have concluded consideration of Committee Report 21-19(2): Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment Report on Government of the Northwest Territories Approach to the Mining Regime Fiscal Review?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We've concluded consideration of Committee Report 21-19(2): Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment Report on Government of the Northwest Territories

Approach to the Mining Fiscal Regime Review. Thank you.

Committee, we've agreed to consider Committee Report 23-19(2): Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on Review of the 2018-19 and 2019-20 Public Accounts. I will go to the chair of the Standing Committee on Government Operations for any opening comments. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Madam Chair, the committee's report was read into the record on December 2nd, 2021. I do not have any additional substantive comments to add at this time. Individual Members may have comments on the report. I'd like to thank committee, the department, and the auditor general for their work on this report. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. I will now open the floor to general comments on Committee Report 23-19(2): Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2018-19 and 2019-20 Public Accounts. Seeing no comments, Member for Yellowknife North.

COMMITTEE MOTION 184-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 23-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
REPORT ON REVIEW OF THE 2018-19 AND
2019-20 PUBLIC ACCOUNTS – PUBLIC-PRIVATE
PARTNERSHIP (P3) CLASSIFICATION FOR OLD
STANTON REFURBISHMENT PROJECT,
CARRIED

MR. JOHNSON: Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends the Department of Finance classify the project to refurbish Old Stanton as a public private partnership and report on it accordingly. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Motion is in order. To the motion? Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would ask that, you know, even if the government disagrees with this motion, they could try to explain what was going on. The auditor general told us that the Old Stanton was a P3, and the GNWT accountants disagreed. We had a battle of the experts going on in committee. And I don't know public accounting standards well enough, or the new P3 standards well enough, but to me when the Auditor General of Canada tells you something is away, according to the public accounts, you listen to them. So I would like to hear a bit more of a detailed response to this motion. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. So this project's actually in my riding, and it's something -- so I've been here six years and I've never really understood how we owned the old hospital and then it was given to somebody else to renovate and then we leased the whole thing back at a cost, and then we get it back at the end of the period when it's been rented to us for 30 years. I've just never really understood that arrangement. It just boggles my mind. And I don't understand why the government didn't keep the building, renovate it, and then we used it for long-term care and extended care, which is I guess the proposed use. I just never understood this. And I'm not sure I would -- if it was up to me, it wouldn't happen again. I'll just leave it that way. 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? All those abstaining? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Member for Yellowknife North.

COMMITTEE MOTION 186-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 23-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
REPORT ON REVIEW OF THE 2018-19 AND
2019-20 PUBLIC ACCOUNTS – REPORTING OF
CONTINGENT LIABILITIES FROM CLAIMS AND
LITIGATION,
CARRIED

MR. JOHNSON: Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the comptroller general enhance reporting in the public accounts of contingent liabilities arising from claims and litigation; and, further specifically,

A. Include a breakdown of claim amounts by category; and,

B. Identify individual claims above a certain threshold.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Motion is in order. To the motion? Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I support this motion. It was duly noted by committee that public litigation has gone up quite a bit for the GNWT over the course of the last five years. But we in committee have no way of knowing what is driving this. We're holding

the government accountable, or really advocating for change for things that are really truly systemic. And so I support this motion and appreciate the conversation that committee had in regards to this. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. So there's an interesting graph in the report by the committee, and it shows that, you know, from 2010-11, to 2015-16, the contingent liability amount in the public accounts was single digit numbers in the millions of dollars, and then it leapfrogged to \$67 million, and now it's at \$107 million for 2019-20. And I guess I have my own suspicions of what's driving this, but I think it's partly that the very complex P3 arrangements that our government is getting into. These are like a thousand pages of documents for each project. And I think it just leaves lots of room for this kind of stuff to happen. So I think we need to get to the root of this and try to better manage this moving forward. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I think having some public reporting on this is just a small part. We're being sued for \$107 million. I have absolutely no idea. There is no public information about who or why that is. If we all of a sudden have \$107 million show up in our budget, none of us are going to be happy. I suspect that a lot of this is from P3 legacy projects and contract disputes. I know there's some various class actions out there. I'm guessing really, based on news headlines, as to why we might all of a sudden owe \$107 million.

Furthermore, I think the GNWT has absolutely refused to ever engage in any sort of transparency about settling litigation. I think they are overusing NDAs. I think in settlement agreements, they are refusing to disclose them. And it's not until maybe sometimes it's reported in either the public accounts or a budget that we catch that oh, we paid millions of dollars; oh, that we messed up a construction project and we had to settle for millions of dollars.

All of the information I have about this is currently found in the news, and none of it is available public anywhere. I believe our government needs to look at this and needs to take a transparent approach to when we settle litigation, why did it occur and publicly report on it. I think they are hiding behind it's before the courts or some fear of the rules, which is unrealistic and not being done in other jurisdictions. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): To the motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Member for Yellowknife North.

COMMITTEE MOTION 187-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 23-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
REPORT ON REVIEW OF THE 2018-19 AND
2019-20 PUBLIC ACCOUNTS – REVIEW OF
FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY POLICY,
CARRIED

MR. JOHNSON: Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the Department of Finance undertake a review of their fiscal responsibility policy to ensure that the policy meets its objective for long-term fiscal sustainability.

And further, that the department provide the committee with an opportunity to comment on any proposed provisions to this policy. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): The motion is in order. To the motion? Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, we talk about the fiscal responsibility policy but we've heard the Department of Finance say that our current spending is unsustainable. There's clearly a disconnect between making sure that the policy works. I think it is doing certain things. I know that it limits us to, you know, funding 50 percent of infrastructure through operating surplus and then we usually reach right up to the other half with debt. And I think this is actually just created a push to use P3s, because they are not part of that analysis. So I think it's having unintended consequences that are actually making us fiscally irresponsible. I think there's some huge questions about how we can create a policy to make sure that our government is fiscally responsible. We have heard just staggering numbers about all sorts of deficits and deferred maintenance and basically every one of our systems, you know, has problems. And it seems that fiscal responsibilities policy just takes none of that into account. So I think this would be a great policy to overtake an overhaul and conduct a review of, and could be a lasting legacy of this government, to make sure we are on a sustainable path. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): To the motion? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Yes, thanks, Madam Chair. Yes, and I want to thank my colleague from Yellowknife North. He's covered off a number of my concerns, particularly with regard to P3s being used increasingly by GNWT.

But the other aspect that the report goes into, and this was found in the audit by the auditor general, was that there was overspending on capital by \$32 million during 2019-20. You know, the 50 percent mark was a certain figure, and we only generated a \$46 million cash operating surplus but we spent \$78 million on capitals using the fiscal responsibility policy.

So even though our government failed to comply with it, there's no consequences. Nothing, except the auditor general blew the whistle on us. So that's another reason why we need to review this policy and make sure that it does really reflect the long-term sustainability, fiscal sustainability, that we should have as a government and for our residents. So I support this motion and look forward to an opportunity to revise that policy. 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? All those abstaining? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Member for Yellowknife North.

COMMITTEE MOTION 188-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 23-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
REPORT ON REVIEW OF THE 2018-19 AND
2019-20 PUBLIC ACCOUNTS – ENHANCEMENT
OF FINANCIAL STATEMENT DISCUSSION AND
ANALYSIS SECTION,
CARRIED

MR. JOHNSON: Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the comptroller general add to the financial statement discussion and analysis section of the public accounts several reporting items that are present in public accounts of other jurisdictions; specifically,

- A. Population data;
- B. Unemployment rates;
- C. Key nonfinancial results of major sectors;

- D. Variances between budget and actuals and between current and prior year actuals by revenue source;
- E. Variances between budget and actuals between current and prior year actuals by expense program and object;
- F. Discussion details on each liability line item; and,
- G. Classification of the indicators of the financial health to one of three elements: Sustainability, flexibility, or vulnerability.

And further, that the comptroller general extend all historical charts in the financial statement discussion and analyses section of the public accounts to include ten years of data. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): The motion is in order. To the motion? Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Committee conducted a review of best practices of public accounts across the jurisdiction and pulled these ones out. I would like to speak to a couple of them.

One, I really believe having ten years worth of data available from the public accounts would allow us to see these larger trends. It's just simply not really there.

Secondly, we make a number of recommendations of lining up the public accounts to the budget and the variances. There was some very odd disconnect that the public accounts are an accounting exercise done by the accountants. They don't even look at the budgets. If there's a difference in the budget, it doesn't matter to them and it doesn't inform the subsequent budget. They're done by different people, and there's just consistent areas where the budget and the public accounts don't line up. Revenue projections being one of them.

We have never predicted our revenue accurately within tens of millions of dollars. And the comptroller general will point this out, and for some reason it doesn't then make a change in the budget. We are one of the worst jurisdictions for this. We get an "F" when people review our financial transparency because our budget and our public accounting are just not aligned. Many other jurisdictions have made it work so that when the public accounts and the accountants point something up, it automatically makes a change in the corresponding main estimates. That's not occurring here. I really would like the comptroller general and the Department of Finance to get

together to make that happen. Thank you, 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? All those abstaining? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Member for Yellowknife North.

COMMITTEE MOTION 189-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 23-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
REPORT ON REVIEW OF THE 2018-19 AND
2019-20 PUBLIC ACCOUNTS – USER-FRIENDLY
AND ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS,
CARRIED

MR. JOHNSON: Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the comptroller general, in consultation with the Office of the Auditor General of Canada and the Standing Committee on Government Operations, study potential changes to the public accounts to make them more user friendly and accessible while ensuring a high degree of transparency and accountability from the Government of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Although I wasn't a Member of the GOVOPS committee in the last Assembly, I do want to acknowledge that there has been some improvements made in the public accounts in the six years I've been here. There's kind of like a plain language user guide that's available now. P3 reporting has improved. I think that's also a reflection of evolving accounting standards throughout the world.

So anyways, there's a number of other recommendations that had been adopted that I just can't think of off the top of my head, but there had been some significant improvements in the public accounts over the six years I've been here. I want to acknowledge that. And I think the standing committee here has made a number of suggestions for further improvements, and I support them. 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? All those abstaining? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Member for Yellowknife North.

COMMITTEE MOTION 190-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 23-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
REPORT ON REVIEW OF THE 2018-19 AND
2019-20 PUBLIC ACCOUNTS – GOVERNMENT
RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS,
CARRIED

MR. JOHNSON: Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to this report within 120 days. Thank you, 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? All those abstaining? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Thank you, committee. Do you agree that you have concluded consideration of Committee Report 23-19(2): Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2018-19 and the 2019-20 public accounts?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We have concluded consideration of Committee Report 23-19(2): Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2018-19 and the 2019-20 Public Accounts. Member for Frame Lake.

What is the wish of committee?

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I move that the chair rise and report progress. Thank you.

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

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

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

Report of Committee of the Whole

MS. SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Committee Report 22-19(2), Committee Report 23-19(2), and would like to report progress with 14 motions passed and that Committee Report 22-19(2) and Committee Report 23-19(2) are concluded. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Do we have a seconder? Member for Nahendeh. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Minister responsible for Finance.

Third Reading of Bills

BILL 45:
APPROPRIATION ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE
EXPENDITURES) 2022-2023

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Range Lake, that Bill 45: Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures) 2022-2023, be read for the third time. Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded a vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Look, I realize I'm the only thing standing between a pizza party and my colleagues here so I want to recognize and thank the Minister of Finance for the collaborative discussions that led to concurrence in Committee of the Whole to proceed with an appropriation bill, and I meant that.

However, this is the largest ever capital project for the Northwest Territories at \$502 million. In short, we are overspending on capital and not spending enough on the right priorities, in my view.

There is a relationship between capital and our programs and services. It's called the fiscal responsibility policy that requires us to have an operating surplus on our operations side to spend money on buildings and big infrastructure. When we overspend big on capital, we have a lot less money to spend on programs and services for our residents. It's left us scrambling to find matching funding from the federal government. Even if the feds gave us free dollars, we still have to find the operations and maintenance money for large projects.

For example, the \$14 million that Infrastructure is now scrambling to find for the upkeep of the Inuvik to Tuk Highway; or, the ongoing service payments for the Tlicho All-Season Highway that will cost us more than \$10 million a year for the next 25 years. All of which eat into our ability to pay for programs and services.

As to further evidence of overspending on capital, look at the 2019-20 public accounts where GNWT failed to comply with our own fiscal responsibility policy. GNWT overspent on capital by \$32 million with no consequences. We cannot get a clear commitment from the Minister to review that policy in light of this overspending and/or the increasing reliance on P3s as a way to finance large projects.

In June of this year, the Finance Minister said, during the budget dialogue, "over the medium term the fiscal situation is unsustainable and projections show that the borrowing limit could be exceeded by 2024-25 even though the limit was increased."

In other words, we are spending too much on capital and not doing enough to raise revenues. The Minister said that we need to "generate more cash from operating surpluses to lessen the borrowing pressures." There are basically two ways to do that - raise more revenues or slash programs and services to continue to spend on capital.

Let's look at the revenue side. The Finance Minister only released the revenue options paper two days before the budget dialogue after my many requests. In my view, this Cabinet is not serious about raising revenues. It gave away \$21 million in revenues to Husky Oil in a significant discovery licence with zero dollars in rent over fifteen years. It rolled back the small business tax and did nothing to replace the \$1.4 million a year in lost revenue.

I've been pushing for a fairness review of our taxation system for six years, to no avail. When I've suggested working with federal opposition parties to increase our portion of own-source revenues under the devolution agreement, it has fallen on deaf ears.

We haven't yet come to a point where we are slashing programs and services as happened in the last Assembly. But the mysterious government renewal initiative will have to come up with millions of dollars of savings to stop us from hitting the debt wall.

We got a public fiscal update from the Finance Minister on September 15th. That presentation made a number of points that show we are on an unsustainable path. As I said before, we're not just on the edge of a fiscal cliff, we're over the side now. We're still in the early stages of economic recovery with a shifting workforce but we have lots of

additional expenses including COVID and flood recovery. When temporary federal capital funding is removed, we are in a permanent deficit position. Debt has grown at a rate of 17.2 percent annually since 2008-09, almost four times the rate of revenue growth. Our ability to spend on capital will decrease dramatically and the Minister predicted it will be less than half what it is now in a couple of years.

I'm all for stimulus spending as part of economic recovery, but we don't seem to be able to get money out the door right now. I couldn't get a concise answer on what the actual carryovers are in the capital estimates but if it is anything like last year's capital budget, that was about 50 percent.

I asked in the last Assembly for carryovers to be tracked carefully so that we actually understand the reasons for that. I am not convinced that a system is yet in place to do that. Are we getting massive carryovers because we've maxed out our contractor capacity; the ability for our economy to do the work that the government intends to contract? Is it as a result of cash flow issues? Problems with our capacity to actually get the funding out the door? I don't know. We don't seem to have a good understanding of why carryovers continue to take place and seem to be on the increase. If you don't track it and understand the reason, we can't work on how to fix it.

I also wonder why we are rushing to spend money that we can't get out the door during a pandemic. At the same time, the procurement review is still underway with changes unlikely to be fully implemented during the 2022-23 fiscal year. Why rush to spend money now when we should change procurement to retain more benefits in the NWT from government spending?

Now, I want to turn to what spending Cabinet is proposing in these capital estimates.

It's my understanding that after a recent increase to the federal borrowing limit, we only have about \$300 million left. How could we ever possibly hope to do the big infrastructure projects, whether it's the Mackenzie Valley Highway, the Slave Geological Province Corridor, the Taltson Expansion, when all we have left is \$300 million? I just don't get it. We need to stop pretending we can ever do all of these and focus on only one if we must, and That should be the Mackenzie Valley Highway if it can be done in small sections where communities can actually benefit from the construction work.

The contract spending on the Slave Geological Province work over the last five years, and Taltson Hydro Expansion, shows that about 10 percent of the money actually stayed in the North. Why are we

doing these projects if only 10 percent of the money is staying in the North?

The Finance Minister said in her opening remarks that we are going to spend \$150 million on roads in the capital budget. That's almost 15 times the amount we are going to spend on new and renovated housing. I understand that there may be other federal funding not in the capital estimates for housing and that may be fixed in future versions, but we continue to spend more on roads than housing - a lot more.

This is totally out of whack with our reality where 43 percent of the NWT dwellings in 2019 had at least one housing problem. Those problems relate to affordability, suitability, and adequacy. If that's not bad enough, core housing needs have actually increased by 11 percent over the last ten years. At last estimate, there are almost 1000 people on the waiting list for housing in the Northwest Territories. That's a shameful record that is perpetuated in these capital estimates. I fully understand that most of the capital funds for the NWT Housing Corporation flow through the main estimates but clearly we are not spending enough on housing to even start to make a difference.

Yes, there are some items I can and do support in the capital estimates, and those will undoubtedly bring economic and social benefits. However, I'm voting against this capital budget to send Cabinet a clear message to get our fiscal house in order. We've got two years left to steer this shipyard in the right direction, Get serious about raising some revenues, and start spending on real priorities like housing. And Mr. Speaker, I would urge Members on our side, if you can't vote against the budget please abstain and start to send that message to Cabinet on the other side. Merci, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Motion is in order. To the motion? Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We came into this Assembly and we had a pretty tight fiscal situation, and so I have a dream. I have a dream of leaving the next Assembly \$100 million of room in their debt ceiling. Enough to pay for a bad forest fire season or a flood but probably not both, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we are on track to spend more money than any Assembly in history. We are on track to also add more debt than any Assembly in history. This budget is worth \$500 million, Mr. Speaker.

And, you know, I actually have very little issue with the individual projects in here. You know, an NWT budget has never been voted down in the history of the Assembly. We are very much a rubber stamp

institution when it comes to budgets. Sometimes some small changes are made in O and M but, in many ways, capital is the one thing people agree on. It creates jobs. It builds the economy. I understand the tendency to want to spend \$500 million here. However, I think we have to understand how the capital budget works. It is a snapshot in time.

We are actually spending, when you total up all over the projects, well over \$2 billion here, Mr. Speaker. This specific capital budget is about 40 percent funded by the GNWT, 60 percent by the federal government. That is good. But when you add up, there's some math I just cannot understand. I have tried, with the publicly available numbers here, but no matter how I crunch the numbers we are set to exceed our debt ceiling with the capital we are planning let alone other major infrastructure projects, let alone operations and maintenance.

Mr. Speaker, there's a couple things I want to speak to but one is my frustration with what is publicly available out there.

We all, in this House, have a copy of the acquisition plan. It can tell you the individual price of projects and what we're doing in future years. That's not a publicly available document so I can't actually speak to specific numbers of projects. But I would like the GNWT, just for one week, to try and operate with what is publicly available, and I think we would fix our transparency problem. If you go over to Yukon for instance, you can see their five-year acquisition plan. Every single project has the range of what they expect to spend on it. Every single project is then tracked and reported on once it is concluded. We asked our staff to try and track a project through the years in the capital budget, and it's next to an impossible task to tell you what the total cost actually comes out. Add on the fact that we often get sued and then settle with contractors, it's an even more impossible task to tell you what something actually ends up costing in the public accounting.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think it needs to be clear that this capital budget means a cut to programs and services. That is what we are voting for today.

Down south, you could argue that there is an option to increase revenue. I don't think that is on the table in the Northwest Territories. We are not getting \$500 million out of our citizens through taxes any time soon.

The extent to which it actually costs in the O and M is a question the Department of Finance could not answer with any clarity. I get it is a complicated question but the disconnect between our capital budget and our O and M budget leads us to, once

again, math that simply does not add up to me, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to admit that I will be voting against this capital budget but I am a relatively cheap vote. I would have voted for this capital budget with five more million dollars in housing, permanent long-term funding for our housing infrastructure.

We heard the other day they have a \$1 billion backlog in infrastructure. They spend \$10 million a year, Mr. Speaker. At that rate, in a hundred years they will have got to their infrastructure backlog and we build houses to last about 40 years, Mr. Speaker. The math does not add up.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is also taking \$2.5 million away from our communities. Priorities throughout this Assembly have been housing. People have to have a roof over their heads and our communities, the foundation of our society, have to be strong. This budget is actually removing capital money from our communities who are stretched so thin you can see through them.

Mr. Speaker, if those two things were to happen, you know, less than a half a percent of this total budget, I probably would have voted in favour but we could not even get an increase to the housing capital which is, in this specific budget, building zero new houses; or, our community infrastructure which, in this case, is actually removing \$2.5 million.

Mr. Speaker, we know that we spend over \$68 million a year on our roads, and we've heard from the Minister that is not nearly enough. We know that the breakdown costs for our deferred maintenance is \$465 million. We allocate \$5 million a year for deferred maintenance. That would take 90 years to catch up on our deferred maintenance backlog. At that point, every single asset in our portfolio would have to also be rebuilt. The math is not adding up. We are not maintaining what we have in any state.

We have an absolutely terrible track record of maintaining what we have, and I think it is very tempting to build new things. But until that math is there and until that responsibility is there, I believe we are setting future Assemblies and future generations up for failure to have more crumbling infrastructure.

This budget does not even get into the power corporation, which we know also needs billions of dollars to keep its infrastructure in a state where they can continue to provide power to the people of the Northwest Territories, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I know that this budget then builds certain human infrastructure and a great example is

long-term care beds. We all know we need those long-term care facilities. But I still don't have a clear explanation on how we're going to afford them. Each of those beds costs hundreds of thousands of dollars to operate. We know there is a \$120 million deficit in our health care system. And the department has committed to a stabilization plan which, to me, is actually just a vague term to meaning cuts to a health care system right now that is being held together with glue and strings and losing nurses at such a fast rate. So on one hand, we are asking our health authority to, you know, add tens of millions of dollars to their budget through long-term care. On the other hand, we are asking them to do a deficit reduction. Mr. Speaker, I believe that the fair conclusion there is that our health system is actually underfunded and perhaps the priority of this Assembly just has to be offer basic health care to people, Mr. Speaker. I am concerned we are on a path where that will be very impossible to do within our fiscal capacity.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many priorities in this House, and I don't think the hard work has been done to prioritize the capital.

I can't tell you how much the school in Colville Lake is going to cost; that's not a figure I'm allowed to say; that's not a figure the Minister will say publicly; but I believe that if we run the math on building a school of that size in Colville Lake, and we apply to all of the schools we need to build, we come to a number that is actually impossible. It's impossible to build schools of that scale in all of our communities, Mr. Speaker. I don't see how this math is adding up, and I don't have the public information to conclude that.

In this capital budget, we are building a line to Whati. I don't have a lot of issues to this project but I think this project makes the most sense if Fortune Minerals signs into a long-term power purchasing agreement and actually buys some power from us. That is about the only way we could justify the expense of this project. I know it's a goal to get communities off hydro. That is something I would like to see but I am being asked to vote for a transmission line without being told the total cost of it, without knowing whether we are actually going to sell power to Fortune Minerals, and without knowing the root of it.

I believe there is something going on where the Department of Infrastructure gets its money into the capital budget far easier than any program or service. I would really like to see the success rate of infrastructure going to FMB for those communities.

In this capital budget is money for community hydro. Apparently, we got it out of ICIP funding. Great. When asked about it, the Minister didn't even

know what community it was going in. We are spending tens of millions of dollars and we don't even know where it's going yet. I don't understand how that gets through ICIP, how that gets through FMB, and how it now puts a tens-of-million-dollar obligation on our budget without even knowing which community it is in, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that's not to say I don't support those projects. That's not to say I don't support community hydro. I would just like to see a bit more due diligence in connecting the capital budget to operations and management to an overall plan for our fiscal stability. I expect, and I hope, the next operations budget starts to make some cuts. There is at least \$50 million in that budget I believe I could find to get us on a path. This budget is inherently linked being connected to the operations budget -- maintenance budget. I do not know what is planned for the next O and M budget but I suspect it is a status quo budget that will take us right up to our debt ceiling and well beyond that and put our next Assembly in the very difficult position of, day one, making hundreds of millions of dollars in cuts, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to see a meaningful plan with our Power Corp. I would like to see a meaningful plan with what is going on with our community infrastructure deficit, our own infrastructure deficit, our road infrastructure deficit. I believe we need to start maintaining what we have before we look into building more.

Mr. Speaker, I believe \$500 million could be better spent. It could be better spent making sure our citizens have roofs over their heads and our communities have infrastructure. They have roads and sewer and recreational facilities that work, and they can provide a strong sense of community. I believe that is our priority. I believe it's insulting to pass this budget that builds zero new houses for the Housing Corp and actually takes money away from our communities, yet passes the single largest capital budget in GNWT history. And for that reason, I don't believe the work has been done, or the due diligence by this Cabinet, to actually take us where we need to be and I will be voting against this budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Motion is in order. To the motion? Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm all about economic growth, always have been. Very pro-business. A long-time resident. Born and raised here, you know, and I wish I would -- when we were going through the capital estimates to cost this budget and see by community. And when I see two MLAs from Yellowknife get up and I bet you -- I bet you 75 percent of these capital estimates is for

the capital. And you have two MLAs from Yellowknife making those kind of comments.

I did not do that because I think if we're going to have economic recovery, Mr. Speaker, this is the way to go. I think they have to be more careful on the way the contracts are given out. I think they have to be more careful on the terms of the contract. I think they have to make sure that the money stays in the North. I am sure that we're going to have a new procurement policy, and those are going to make sure that our people are looked after in the North.

What comes out of this budget, there's a few extra buildings for regional centres and communities. We get the crumbs, always. And we're very happy with the budget because we know at least we're going to have some new buildings this time.

That hasn't happened in regional centres and communities for some time. And it disturbs me that it comes across this way when economic recovery is extremely important during this pandemic and, hopefully, we get through this pandemic.

Businesses are suffering, large and small. And it trickles down to the entire Northwest Territories. If you don't have business, you don't have no social programs.

I feel really strongly that, you know, when you talk about the negative part of rebuilding, it's not okay. You have to be in business. I've been in business for 50 years. The only way we put food on the table is because we were in business. We had to work really hard to do that. It wasn't given to us. There's lots of us like that in -- and also in Indigenous culture, you know.

Growing up, many of us -- my father had to go out on the land when I first grew up. I worked for 50 cents an hour when I was in high school in order to get a new sweater for school.

So there's a lot of disconnect when I hear people that have not been born here and gone through all those hardships in the North and making those kind of decisions on behalf of our own people.

I fully support this budget because there has to be economic growth in the business sector, in the wider sector of government. Mistakes are always made. Mistakes are made even in business. But you correct them and move on and learn from them.

And so that is the reason I will be voting for this budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Hay River North.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just bear with me because I have to use my computer for this one.

Mr. Speaker, after careful review of the budget, I would like to confirm that there are departments that I'm pleased with and those that are left wanting.

And I just want to make a point, is that, you know, I'm an Indigenous person, lived in the Northwest Territories all my life. I have worked blue collar jobs. I, you know, worked, you know, my way up. I know what it's like to have to put food on the table; you know, go without a wage. You know, I felt the bad times and I felt the good times. So, you know, I'm hoping that, you know, what I say has some bearing.

Mr. Speaker, we are about to come out of the pandemic with limited new capital projects that would ensure our northern residents and businesses will be put to work. Absent any new medium-sized projects, we may experience a period of reduced opportunities for small to medium-sized businesses that may well resonate into a period of stagnation in the NWT.

Albeit, we do have major project work being carried over from previous Assemblies such as the Mackenzie Valley Highway, Talston Expansion, and the Slave Geological Province Corridor.

These long-term projects will continue well into the 20th Assembly and beyond. These projects will provide some northern employment in the future but as with many of the larger projects in the North, will eliminate many of the small to medium or midsized businesses from participating.

Mr. Speaker, if we are to move out of this pandemic and move ahead as a territory, then we must make sure that we immediately identify and plan our short and medium-term infrastructure needs. It is these projects that are the bread and butter of most businesses in the North. These projects support and aid in the continued growth of our communities.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government has provided stimulus dollars to continue to fuel the economy during the pandemic. This will come to an end and we, as a government, have failed in developing business plans needed to secure and back up any requests for securing sufficient project dollars. The lack of new capital projects in the budget raises a question: What has this government been doing for the last two years in respect to seeking federal infrastructure funding for the NWT?

We need to immediately identify infrastructure projects, develop plans, and meet with the federal government to request those dollars to fund projects. Here, we have failed.

Mr. Speaker, another issue is the lack of housing. This is a major stumbling block when it comes to employability in many of the small communities where jobs may be short term and seasonal. It is an issue when it comes to educating our youth. It is an issue when it comes to community health. It is an issue when it comes to addictions and mental health.

Mr. Speaker, housing is not only a matter for this or any government to solve. It is an issue that will need to be addressed through collaboration and buy-in from residents, communities, Indigenous governments, and the private sector. But it also takes money.

Mr. Speaker, this government has access to federal programs that support new infrastructure. As example, the national housing co-investment fund, for which two streams exist with northern proponents having access to both. These program dollars are meant to provide for new revitalized and affordable housing. The government needs to ensure the supports are available for anyone or any organization wanting to access these funds.

Some of the issues with increasing the public and private sector market in the NWT is partly due to untimely legislative requirements, not understanding community needs, access to land, supply chain issues, increased material costs, access to labor, transportation issues, over design of buildings, maintenance and repair costs.

To move ahead, we need to build partnerships and action in many reviews and studies that have been completed. We need to have shovel-ready housing projects that will provide much needed housing to many of our Northerners, residents in the communities outside Yellowknife. Here, we are falling short. We have houses on the books that should have been built this year and haven't been.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one significant component of this Legislative Assembly is the diverse view and interests brought to the table by all 19 Members. This diversity can be appreciated in the priorities of this 19th Assembly, some with competing interests but all important.

One sector that we need to focus and support strongly is the nonrenewable resource sector. This sector resources are untapped. The lands of the Northwest Territories hold vast resource of minerals, oil and gas. We have to work towards reducing the timeline from inception to production. We must have substantive agreements that ensure compensation to this government is certain and fair. We must make sure that northern businesses are positioned to participate, that residents are positioned to participate.

To access these resources, we need roads to these resources and must focus on the construction of the Mackenzie Valley Highway by making it the highest of priorities as it is the one that will have a major impact on the economy, a major impact on business opportunities, a major impact on jobs, and a major impact on cost of living for residents of the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is light on community infrastructure housing and resource development; however, I will vote in support of this budget because we got to move ahead and I just hope that the -- or the Ministers on the other side take note of what I said. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Motion is in order. To the motion? Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, all I'm going to say is ditto to my colleague from Hay River South. Everything that he has spoken to is exactly the same things that I feel. We sit here and talk about large infrastructure projects but we also need to remember that there are a lot of small infrastructure projects, including a very important highway in your riding, Mr. Speaker, the Dempster Highway. So this is not just only -- I'm pleased, actually, to see a budget that does take into account that we need to build more infrastructure, that our lack of infrastructure is really putting us behind the 8-ball in every department, in every sector, and we need to make sure that we are able to connect all of our regions and our communities. So I would actually like to take this moment to urge Cabinet to go back and ask for more infrastructure dollars but more for the smaller roads and such as well. We had at one point a discussion with the Yukon government about a joint ask around fixing the Dempster Highway so that it wasn't beautiful to one spot and then became a nightmare afterwards. We're going to be looking at more liability if that road continues to be on the way that it is. We will see deaths on that road. I can promise you that, if we don't get the money to fix it properly.

So I urge Cabinet to not only pass -- that I will be passing this infrastructure -- or this capital budget, but also that they need to get more money going and get that money out the door and get it out the door to Indigenous people, not people with just one employee in the North. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Motion is in order. To the motion? Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am supporting this budget. This budget has an impact on a lot of the people in

the riding that I serve who are business owners and who are looking to continue to put food on their tables and the tables of the employees that they keep staffed and working for their businesses.

To me, I absolutely do agree with some of the words of the MLA for Frame Lake and the MLA for Yellowknife North in that the government does need to change the way that it's doing business. The way the government is doing business right now is not sustainable. But I don't feel that hampering the ability of northern businesses to attain contracts from the GNWT, which is our largest surplus of cash into our NWT economy right now, is the way to go about it. I feel that if we want to send a message, then we need to talk about how we vote come main estimate time, which is money that directly impacts the functioning of the GNWT and not the functioning of our businesses. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Motion is in order. To the motion? Member for Monfwi.

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I will be supporting this budget as well. I was going to abstain but realizing that we do need more infrastructure in my regions, and yesterday I said we have high unemployment rate, and I know there is going to be lot of jobs that's going to be coming up through these infrastructure. And I know I am aware that Whati people are paying for high power rates. So Whati transmission line is on there. But it would be nice if we can have more money invested in mental health, addiction, and housing. And I think as a government, we can do more to get more money from the federal or, you know -- or partner up with other organizations as well. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Motion is in order. To the motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The Minister's 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 Thebacha. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Monfwi. The Member for Deh Cho. 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 North.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please rise.

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

MR. SPEAKER: All those abstaining, please rise.

The results of the recorded vote: 14 in favour, two opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 45 has had third reading. Third reading of bills. Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment.

BILL 30:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE AURORA COLLEGE
ACT

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 30, an Act to Amend the Aurora College Act, be read for the third time. And Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Motion is in order. To the motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The Minister's 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 Hay River South. The Member for Monfwi. The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Deh Cho. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Nahendeh. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Thebacha. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The results of the recorded vote: 16 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstention. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 30 has had third reading.

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

Orders of the Day

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland):
Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Thursday, December 9th, 2021, 1: 30 p.m.

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
 - Oral Question 846-19(2) Addictions, Aftercare and Mental Health Supports
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions
 - Motion 46-19(2) Appointments to Board of Management and Standing
 - Motion 47-19(2) Repeal and Replace Rules of the Northwest Territories
 - Motion 48-19(2) Extended Adjournment of the House to February 2, 2022
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 23, An Act to Amend the Public Utilities Act
 - Bill 29, Resource Royalty Information

Disclosure Statute Amendment Act

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This House stands adjourned until Thursday, December 9th, 2021, at 1:30 p.m.

----ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 4:53 p.m.

