

**QUESTION 18-19(1):**  
**MANDATE DIRECTION FOR GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**  
**DEPARTMENTS**  
December 11<sup>th</sup> 2019

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. In my statement earlier today, I noted that the priorities of the 19th Assembly do not provide clear direction for many of the departments and agencies and Ministers. I would like to know from the Premier whether she agrees with that assessment. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree that the priorities that were developed by the 19th Legislative Assembly could have used another day. I did also feel that there were too many. We had tried to get them down. We didn't get to that process. "Think big" was kind of the last thing we were left with, and we thought big.

Yes, I do agree that it didn't address all the things that we wanted to. Although, I am not 100 percent sure, Mr. Speaker, if we would have spent another day, if we would have made every single Member in this House happy. It is a process that we go through. I am respectful of the process. Cabinet has dealt with 22 priorities that we are trying to work through. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Premier for that. I don't think she really answered my question, though, which was really about whether the priorities that we have provide clear direction to all of her Ministers. Now, I don't want to get into the specifics of the process that we are engaged in in terms of developing a mandate, but I think it is pretty clear that those priorities don't provide sufficient direction to all of the Ministers. I am just wondering: can the Premier tell us how the initial direction will be set for each Minister to cover matters outside of the priorities?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I will try to do a better job of addressing both issues. For clear direction, I may be wrong, but my understanding is that the priorities that are developed by every Legislature are not to encompass every single task that every department will do. It is meant to define what the major issues are that we want to tackle. It does not give clear direction for every single department, nor is it meant to, in my understanding. I am only one Member of the Legislative Assembly, though, so I am open to feedback on that.

For how we deal with other departments, business still goes on. The departments do not just stop working because they don't have a mandate that is specific to them. They still have business that goes on on a daily basis, and Members do have feedback into that. They have feedback through our main estimates. They have feedback into our business plans. They have feedback into our capital plans. There

is business that still continues to go forward, and Members do have a chance to have input into the business and the day-to-day operations of departments.

MR. O'REILLY: Once again, I want to thank the Premier for that. I guess I expected to hear about things like the transition reports, briefing notes that have been left from the previous Ministers, and that kind of thing. Can the Premier tell us what the mechanisms will be for setting the overall direction for each Minister or department, and what role in the process does the Premier see for the Regular MLAs?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: This is kind of a recap of the question that was asked of me yesterday, so I will kind of recap the answer. Twenty-two priorities were developed by all Members of this House. We are in the process of working with Regular Members on how to identify the mandates to get us to reach the actions to be reached, the priorities that we have identified as our priorities, not every single issue. Again, like I said, I am open to feedback. If Members want to send me their input, walk in my door, I am available. I am in Yellowknife. My phone number is available. Give me a call. Talk to me about what you want to see.

My biggest priority for myself, and I have said that over and over, will be to make sure that we are transparent, that we are working as closely as possible with all stakeholders, including all MLAs. Like I said yesterday, MLAs also have a chance to give feedback into the individual departments themselves through our main estimates, through our business planning process, and through our capital budgets. There is lots of time within the four years to give input into how the departments work.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Once again, I want to thank the Premier for that. I guess what I am most worried about is where the initial direction is going to come from for each of the Ministers and the departments. Yesterday, the Premier suggested to the Member for Yellowknife Centre that people could go and walk into her office and talk to her about priorities. That's not a very efficient or effective way of doing this. It doesn't recognize the role that standing committees should play in terms of consensus government, so I have suggested privately and publicly that the Premier be prepared to share the draft mandate letters with each of the standing committees. Is that something that the Premier is prepared to do in the spirit of open, transparent, and consensus-style government?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: We are trying to be more open and transparent. I think that was a direction that we were given by the general public. It is a direction that I have given my Ministers. However, I have also heard from MLAs across the table in different areas, "Let's get to work. Let's get it done." My Ministers are also waiting. They have been waiting months to get their mandate letters. We're still in the process. Everybody is just anxious to get them, so I want to get these off. I want to get to work.

I will not commit to going through the process, because from delivering the draft mandate right now, we started that about a month ago, when I was first elected, when the priorities were first made. We are

going into our second draft on the 14th. We won't be finished the process until February. I am afraid that it will take too long, so I will take some flak. I have to make hard decisions. That, I know.

What I am willing to do is, once those mandate letters are done, we will post them publicly. We will share them with all standing committees, and as I said before, Regular MLAs have many chances to have input into the business of departments, through question and answer, through business plans, main estimates, and through capital budgets. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.