

**KEVIN O'REILLY—MLA FRAME LAKE**  
**Aviation Industry Support**  
**Committee of the Whole—2021-2022 Supplementary Operations Expenditures**  
**Budget Review**  
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**MR. O'REILLY;** Thanks, Madam Chair, I appreciate that. I have one other area that I want to turn to, and it's one of my favorites - the Northwest Territories wage top-up program. So there's money in here. It looks like it's being offset by the Government of Canada. When is this program going to run out in the Northwest Territories, and what happens afterwards? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler);** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK;** Thank you, Madam Chair. So again-- so the wage top-up program, you might recall, was originally when some essential workers, typically in the south jurisdictions, were not necessarily returning to work and not making themselves available at their workplaces because of the risks associated at the time of COVID-19 and the option was to go on to the various relief programs. So this was an opportunity to try to encourage people to go back into those workplaces that were highly needed. Our wages, being what they are in the Northwest Territories, was such that-- and the fact that a lot of essential workers are government employees, we were able to top up everybody and bring everyone up to an \$18 an hour rate. And, again, our wages being what they were, that money was simply not getting spent such that we continued to have funds available, and we have the ability-- Canada has allowed the Northwest Territories to be flexible in the application of the program. Right now, we are going to let the program go until August 31st, 2021, and if there's any additional funds required, we would be funding it from within the Department of Finance. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler);** Member.

**MR. O'REILLY;** Thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, I appreciate that, so August 31st. The problem is, of course, some people are going to see their wages go down the very next day, September 1st, to our minimum wage which, if I remember, is \$15.10 -- 25 cents. Anyways, they're going to see a substantial drop in their wages. I've identified this as a problem. We don't seem to have a high enough minimum wage here. We talked about guaranteed basic income but there doesn't seem to be a lot of appetite on the other side for this. So I just think this is unfair for workers when this program runs out, and we need to figure out a way to assist them and do something better. Thanks, Madam Chair.