

**ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE**

**QUESTION 412-18(3):  
INCREASING INVESTMENT IN TOURISM INDUSTRY**

**QUESTION 420-18(3):  
INVESTING IN TOURISM DIVERSIFICATION**

**October 18, 2018**

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. The tourism industry, as we know, continues to grow, and spending more money on product diversification makes sense, but the budget for this program is over-subscribed and it is now currently unavailable. What is the Minister's plan to increase investment in this vital program? Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, ITI has to work within the constraints of the budgetary process and the money that we are allocated. We have had a serious look at the SEED Program. This House knows that. We looked at it last year. We have changed things around to try to make things better for entrepreneurs by changing certain parameters around programs and having regional supports. We will continue to do that within the budget that we have. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. GREEN:** As I understand that answer, two points are prominent. One is that it is our fault for not asking, and the other is that SEED is the alternative. Are those, in fact, the case?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** I will get used to standing up today here. Yes, she could take some of the blame if she wants, the Member, for not asking. The budgetary process is done by all Members of this House, and we know how it is allocated. The budget that ITI has, that is what I have to prescribe to. I can make my case as we go through these deliberations with my Cabinet Members, but there is only so much money to go around for the whole Northwest Territories. That is what I have been allocated, and that is what I will continue to work with.

**MS. GREEN:** As the Minister knows, the Tourism 20/20 plan is moving towards expiry. I am interested to know what work is taking place now to create Tourism 2025.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Yes, 20/20 is coming due, and we have made successful milestones. As all Members of this House know, we have already achieved probably what we wanted to there as far as number of tourists coming to the Northwest Territories and the amount of money spent in the NWT. We will continue to work on that. We will probably be releasing some of those numbers shortly, of last year's visitations and money spent in the NWT, and I think most Members will be happy.

We will be working closely with all proponents, being us and Members of this House, for feedback, as well as NWT Tourism to develop 2025. I just came back from an FPT on tourism, so I have some new information that was presented to us from various

proponents across the country of challenges around tourism right across the country that we will try to implement in our new strategy as well.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have seen incredible growth in tourism during the period of the Tourism 20/20 plan, and this sector of our economy needs more support than it currently gets. My question for the Minister is: will the new plan include more money for both community investment and product development than the current plan has? Thank you.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** We are a victim of our own success. I have said that in this House before. Build it, and they will come. That is what happened around tourism, and that is what is happening particularly in the region of Yellowknife.

The numbers are increasing every year. There are all kinds of challenges around that, but as we move forward with the 2025 plan, we are going to have to have deliberations around budgets and stuff, and I am going to have to make the case going forward for what tourism needs in the Northwest Territories. I will have to make the case in a significant way that the Finance Minister and Cabinet Members will divvy up the money accordingly. This is a priority for the Government of the Northwest Territories for all of the Members in this House, and we will pursue that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION 420-18(3):  
INVESTING IN TOURISM DIVERSIFICATION

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. I fear the Minister is not walking the talk on diversification. Tourism represents a tremendous opportunity for our economy for diversification, but we do need considerable investment to make the most of it, for example, in community infrastructure. He has said that, in this biggest-ever capital budget, we will see all kinds of goodies, but what I see here is incremental changes rather than new projects. Can he tell me whether there are any new tourism infrastructure projects in the capital budget? Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When ITI is up in Committee of the Whole, and I believe we are probably going to be one of the first ones up, we have a capital budget of a significant investment of, I cannot remember the exact number, but we will be able to deliberate our capital investment around infrastructure and tourism when I get into the Committee of the Whole around all regions of the Northwest Territories.

**MS. GREEN:** I hate to spoil the surprise, but the capital estimates for tourism and parks show a decrease of more than 50 per cent over last year, to just over \$3 million, so it's hard to reconcile that level of investment with the "biggest-ever capital budget we have seen." So why is tourism consistently losing out in this government's capital estimates?

**MR. SPEAKER:** I would just like to remind Members that capital estimates is before the

Committee of the Whole. When it comes to that, there will be detailed discussion, so it should not be discussed in question period. If you want to rephrase your question, Member for Yellowknife Centre?

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my concern is that, when it comes to community infrastructure, we are not seeing significant new investments. For example, we heard from my colleague from Nunakput about the lack of tourism services in Tuktoyaktuk, despite years of road development and the anticipation of tourism being a big draw there. Likewise, we don't have a visitors' centre here in Yellowknife, so my question is: what kind of investment can we expect before the end of this term, in real economic diversification in tourism?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** As I have said, we are going to be going into the Committee of the Whole. We have clearly laid out what our investment is around the money that we've been allocated, and that we will continue to work on that. I am not scared to talk about tourism. Tourism is a big deal in the Northwest Territories. We just came from an FPT; it's a significant challenge right across this country. Things that I have learned from earlier this week's meeting at our FPT is some of the challenges right across this whole country are no different than what we are facing in our territory. In fact, when they were doing the presentation, I reached over to the assistant deputy minister, and I said, "It's almost like the exact same thing that is going on in the NWT and what challenges we are facing."

So the whole country is facing these challenges around infrastructure needs, shortage of hotel space, high cost of air travel across this country, how do we move people out of regional centres to the regions. This is a problem that's right across this country, and it's very well information-shared, I think, across the country about how we have to figure out a way to address this with federal support, as well.

**MS. GREEN:** It's cold comfort to find out that these problems are widespread. We are talking about what's happening here in the NWT, and the investments we need now to capitalize on tourism. How many people who went to Tuktoyaktuk and found there wasn't even a place to dump their sewage are going to be in a big hurry to recommend their friends go back? So my question really is about the priority of investing in tourism. I still have not heard that the Minister is willing to invest any additional money in tourism diversification and infrastructure before the end of our term. Is that, in fact, the case?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** As I have said, I only have the money that is allocated to me, but I am glad to sit down with committee. Anytime they want to have a discussion on how we can improve different funding levels for different programs within my portfolio, I am glad to do that, but the real crux of this is we only have so much money that this government has. If you are going to give it to me, you are going to have to take it from someone else on this side of the room, so that is the hard discussion that we are going to have to make here. Without increasing revenues in this territory and attracting more capital and industry to help support our economy and grow our economy, because that is 30 per cent of our economy, the mining sector in particular, what are we going to do? That is why all 19 of us are in this room, and we have to have those discussions.

We are trying to grow the economy, particularly the Department of ITI, to unlock our

potential on what we are going to do to increase revenues for this government, but the reality is we only have so much money. If you want to put more money into tourism and diversification, I am all for it, but we have to have those conversations amongst all of us, and, to make my pie bigger, you are going to have to take it from someone else's.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member for Yellowknife Centre.

**MS. GREEN:** Mr. Speaker, the pie is pretty big at \$1.8 billion. I think there are different ways that it can be sliced. As someone else in this House has already pointed out today, when money is needed on an emergency basis, it's there. The pie seems to get bigger as needed, so this is a conversation that we will have in the Committee of the Whole on the capital budget and during the O and M budget in the winter.

My final question is about the feasibility of winterizing one campground north of Great Slave Lake and one south to accommodate late-season travellers. I noted when I went to Hay River about three weeks ago that there were quite a number of RVs on the road. I knew that, at the same time, they would have nowhere to park on their way to Yellowknife. There was nowhere to park in Hay River either. The campgrounds are closed. Can the Minister consider winterizing two campgrounds in the Northwest Territories to accommodate these late-season travellers? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** If I remember correctly, and we would have to go to Hansard, I think I made the commitment that, when we put out these campgrounds to tender, because it all comes back to funding, I would actually ask for a provision on how much it would cost to keep these things open a little bit longer. Based on the amount of money that we have allocated, I don't believe that we can do that.

One thing we are doing around winter campgrounds, particularly in the Yellowknife region, is we are looking at keeping these open for entrepreneurs around the tourism sector to be able to access our campgrounds and use them. We are doing that. I can't remember the number off the top of my head at briefing, though, but I think there are 36 businesses that have permits to use our campgrounds for Aurora viewing, and we will continue to support that.

The reality is that this comes back to what I just answered in my previous question. There's only so much money. That's what we have to work with, all of us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.