

**ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE**  
**QUESTION 75-19(2): IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS ON NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**  
**TOURISM**

**February 14, 2020**

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. Aurora tourism is a major component of the NWT tourism industry, and Chinese tourists accounted for about 20 percent of all the tourists who came to the NWT last year. Last month, the Chinese government suspended group tours because of the risk of spreading the corona virus. My question is: does the Minister have any information on the impact of the coronavirus shutdown on tourism? Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do know that there will be impacts as a result of the coronavirus. However, at this time, we don't have those numbers in front of us, and we don't feel like we will really have the full picture until likely around the fall of this year, when we can look at the numbers for the season and see where we are at. I would like to remind that, while we do have a lot of Chinese visitors and they do play an important role in our tourism sector, we do have people coming from other locations around the world. While this will impact our tourism sectors and we will feel the impact, we still feel we will have a robust, vibrant tourism season. Thank you.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you to the Minister for that answer. Without data, I am not sure how the Minister can assure us that tourism will be vibrant and that there will be impacts. My specific question on this is: what kind of data is collected on where aurora tourism dollars are spent, say, by community and on what kinds of products?

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Fair enough. I may be a little bit optimistic in using the word "vibrant," and I acknowledge that. I would like to hope that we will continue to see a good season. However, I do acknowledge what the Member is saying in that there is no way I could predict that at this time. Again, I also cannot fully answer what metrics will be collected. Obviously, we will be looking at things like direct impacts to airfare, cancellations on airlines; we will be looking at asking the hotels, et cetera, to provide numbers for their types of cancellations, and such; so I assume that there will be a fairly

robust data collection. I am committed to sharing that with the Member when I get that information going forward.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you to the Minister for that answer. I would like the Minister to go beyond assuming that there will be robust data collection and order robust data collection. Further, how can the government improve the timeliness of the reporting? Fall is a long, long time from now to assist tourism marketing and planning efforts.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Let me just clarify my point, then. While I said that I did not feel like we would have a great or a full understanding of the entire impacts until the fall, I am sure that we will be apprising the public and the Members -- we will be; I will commit to that -- prior to the fall. As we start to collect the data and we can analyze it and look, we will commit to updating the Members as we progress through that data 22 analysis, and I will commit to it being a robust data collection. As an engineer, I love data, so I will commit to that to the Member.

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

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister's commitment on that. The point about early and diverse data collection is to assist tourism marketing and planning efforts, which are obviously essential to shoring up our industry. My final question is: what efforts will the Minister make to re-establish Chinese markets, to assure Chinese visitors they are welcome, and to assist small businesses that may be impacted by the cancellations caused by the coronavirus outbreak? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Environment and -- sorry, Industry, Tourism and Investment. Sorry.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have enough on my plate without ENR, so, yes, thank you . ---Laughter

It is my understanding that Northwest Territories Tourism, they are a destination marketing organization, they are actually at this point continuing to market to China, as not the entire country of China has been impacted by this. So it is our plan to continue with marketing toward China and Chinese tourists. As well, we will work with the Chinese tourism counterparts to ensure that we can communicate with them that we want them to come to the Northwest Territories, that we are still committed to them as a marketplace for our tourism products, and that we will work closely with them and help to facilitate the exchange of information between the two countries. Thank you.