



Yukon Legislative Assembly

1st Session

35th Legislature

Index to **HANSARD**

October 7, 2021 to December 2, 2021

NOTE

The 2021 Fall Sitting of the First Session of the Thirty-Fifth Legislature occupies two volumes

	Issue Numbers	Page Numbers
Volume 2	12 - 26	311 - 745
Volume 3	27 - 42	747 - 1204

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier Government House Leader* Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
Hon. Nils Clarke	Riverdale North	Minister of Highways and Public Works; Environment
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Government House Leader* Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Minister of Economic Development; Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Jeanie McLean	Mountainview	Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

Currie Dixon	Leader of the Official Opposition Copperbelt North	Scott Kent	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Yvonne Clarke	Porter Creek Centre	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Emily Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Annie Blake	Vuntut Gwitchin

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

*Government House Leader: Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee to November 4, 2021; Hon. John Streicker from November 5, 2021

ADJOURNED DEBATES

Bill No. 202: <i>Second Appropriation Act 2021-22</i> : Second Reading (Time expired) (Dixon),	359
Motion No. 113 - Re amendment to Standing Order 76 (Amendment to) (Time expired) (Pillai), ..	393
Motion No. 168 - Re reviewing social assistance rates (Amendment to) (Time expired) (Mostyn),	633
Motion No. 217 - Re supporting acting chief medical officer of health's recommendations (Division) (Dixon),	924
Motion No. 239 - Re establishing a publicly funded community walk-in clinic (Time expired) (McPhee),	1052

BILLS (see **BILLS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT BILLS** and **GOVERNMENT BILLS**)**BILLS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT BILLS**

No. 1 - <i>Act to Perpetuate a Certain Ancient Right</i> (Tredger)	
Introduction and First Reading,	6
No. 300 - <i>Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act</i> (Cathers)	
Introduction and First Reading,	197
No. 301 - <i>Act to Amend the Taxpayer Protection Act</i> (Cathers)	
Introduction and First Reading,	259

BLAKE, ANNIE (see also **DEPUTY SPEAKER, CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**)

Questions, oral:

COVID-19 testing,	865
Domestic violence support for women,	888
Health care services,	972, 1183
Midwifery legislation,	811
Opioid crisis,	1089
Physician recruitment and retention,	581
Safe at Home plan,	553
Sexual abuse within elementary school,	367
Social assistance rates,	752

Speaks on:

Bill No. 7: <i>Act to Amend the Family Property and Support Act (2021)</i> : Second Reading,	407
--	-----

Ministerial statements:

COVID-19 vaccinations for youth,	968
COVID-19 vaccine booster shots,	638

BLAKE, ANNIE (*continued*)

Speaks on:

Ministerial statements:

Creative and cultural industries strategy,	1149
Great Yukon Summer Freeze program,	550
Prenatal nutrition program,	945
Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in youth centre,	750
Motion No. 112 - Re coverage for the cystic fibrosis drug Trikafta,	370, 378
Motion No. 168 - Re reviewing social assistance rates,	622
Motion No. 169 - Re resignation of Deputy Premier from Cabinet,	612
Motion No. 200 - Re Naloxone nasal spray,	847
Motion No. 243 - Re appointment of Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators Chief Adjudicator and Deputy Chief Adjudicator,	1125
Motion No. 244 - Re appointments to the Yukon Human Rights Commission,	1125
Motion No. 245 - Re appointments to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators, ...	1126

CATHERS, BRAD

Questions, oral:

Midwifery legislation,	970
Physician recruitment and retention,	521, 640, 946
Political party fundraising,	1062, 1121, 1152
Sexual abuse within elementary school,	322, 366, 368, 400, 402, 428, 488, 552, 580, 607, 666, 916
Yukon Hospital Corporation funding,	699

Speaks on:

Bill No. 6: <i>Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021)</i> : Second Reading,	432
Bill No. 7: <i>Act to Amend the Family Property and Support Act (2021)</i> : Second Reading, ..	407
Bill No. 7: <i>Act to Amend the Family Property and Support Act (2021)</i> : Third Reading, ..	1064
Bill No. 10: <i>Act to Amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021)</i> : Second Reading,	814, 815
Bill No. 202: <i>Second Appropriation Act 2021-22</i> : Second Reading,	340
Ministerial statements:	
Copper Ridge Place renovation,	578
COVID-19 vaccination requirements,	833
COVID-19 vaccinations for youth,	968
COVID-19 vaccine booster shots,	638
Flooding in Yukon,	328
Prenatal nutrition program,	944

CATHERS, BRAD (*continued*)

Speaks on:

Motion No. 112 - Re coverage for the cystic fibrosis drug Trikafta,	371
Motion No. 167 - Re extending the Special Committee on Electoral Reform's reporting deadline,	560
Motion No. 169 - Re resignation of Deputy Premier from Cabinet,	609, 622
Motion Respecting Committee Reports No. 1 - Re concurrence in the 1 st Report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges,	1186

CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (see also DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE)**CLARKE, NILS**

Speaks on:

Bill No. 3: <i>Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act</i> (2021): Second Reading,	1159
Bill No. 4: <i>Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021)</i> : Second Reading,	463
Bill No. 4: <i>Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021)</i> : Third Reading,	868, 869
Bill No. 202: <i>Second Appropriation Act 2021-22</i> : Second Reading,	348
Ministerial statements:	
COVID-19 vaccination verification,	1085, 1086
Single-use shopping bags,	364, 365
United Nations Climate Change Conference,	993, 994
Youth Panel on Climate Change,	456, 458
Yukon 511 services,	914, 915
Yukon Climate Leadership Council,	721, 723
Motion No. 113 - Re amendment to Standing Order 76,	388
Motion No. 169 - Re resignation of Deputy Premier from Cabinet,	616
Motion No. 236 - Re non-confidence in Government,	1034

CLARKE, YVONNE

Questions, oral:

Affordable housing,	863
<i>Child and Family Services Act</i> review,	783
COVID-19 vaccine and safety measures,	919
Midwifery legislation,	1120
Obstetric and gynecological care,	642, 667, 697
Psychology profession regulation,	997
Sexual assault cases,	492

CLARKE, YVONNE (*continued*)

Questions, oral:

Student psychoeducational assessments,	727
Whistle Bend school,	1091
Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues membership,	524

Speaks on:

Ministerial statements:

Housing initiatives fund,	862
LGBTQ2S+ inclusion action plan,	518
Yukon housing summit,	318

CLERK OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Informs the Assembly of the absence of the Speaker,	663, 691
Reads bills for Assent,	1202
Reports on Petition No. 1,	314
Reports on Petition No. 2,	314
Reports on Petition No. 3,	456
Reports on Petition No. 4,	604
Reports on Petition No. 5,	693
Reports on Petition No. 6,	861
Reports on Petition No. 7,	943
Reports on Petition No. 8,	1147

COMMISSIONER (Hon. Angélique Bernard)

Assents to bills,	1202
-------------------------	------

COMMITTEES, REPORTS OF STANDING*Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees*

<i>First Report</i> (dated July 27, 2021) (Sessional Paper No. 15),	314
---	-----

Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges First Report (dated October 7, 2021)

(Sessional Paper No. 16),	314
---------------------------------	-----

COMMITTEES, SPECIAL

Electoral Reform, Special Committee on, reporting deadline extended (Motion No. 167 agreed to), .	561
---	-----

DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (see also DEPUTY CHAIR'S RULINGS and DEPUTY CHAIR'S STATEMENTS)

DEPUTY CHAIR'S STATEMENTS

Re addressing the Deputy Chair in a non-gendered manner,	418
Re witnesses - Chair requests that minister's remarks during the questioning of witnesses by the opposition be brief,	905
Re witnesses - questions asked of witnesses should be answered by witnesses, not by ministers interjecting during the questioning of witnesses,	1002
Re witnesses - the time for opening remarks by witnesses has elapsed; witnesses are to wait to be recognized by the Chair before speaking, and are to indicate when finished speaking, ..	899
Re witnesses to indicate when a reply has concluded,	537
Re witnesses to wait to be recognized by the Chair before speaking,	541
Re witnesses - unless the minister is rising on a point of order, the opposition can continue questioning the witnesses,	905

DEPUTY SPEAKER'S RULINGS

Re Question of privilege re social media advertisement by the Hon. Mr. Mostyn, Minister of Community Services presuming the passage of a bill (defers ruling),	671
Re relevance - length of remarks in raising a question of privilege,	671

DEPUTY SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS

Re calls recess due to disorder in the gallery,	663
Re difficulty hearing member speaking,	616
Re relevance - length of remarks,	671
Re visitors in the gallery not to participate in proceedings,	663
Re visitors in the gallery required to wear masks,	663

DIVISIONS

Bill No. 3: <i>Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021):</i> Second Reading,	1168
Bill No. 4: <i>Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021):</i> Second Reading,	464
Third Reading,	869
Bill No. 5: <i>Act to Amend the Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act (2021):</i> Second Reading,	406
Third Reading,	870
Bill No. 6: <i>Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021):</i> Third Reading,	1202
Bill No. 6: <i>Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021):</i> Second Reading,	437

DIVISIONS *(continued)*

Bill No. 7: <i>Act to Amend the Family Property and Support Act (2021):</i>	
Second Reading,	407
Third Reading,	1064
Bill No. 8: <i>Workers' Safety and Compensation Act:</i>	
Second Reading,	559
Third Reading,	1202
Bill No. 9: <i>Act to Amend the Cannabis Control and Regulation Act (2021):</i>	
Second Reading,	501
Third Reading,	1002
Bill No. 10: <i>Act to Amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021):</i>	
Second Reading,	815
Third Reading,	1092
Bill No. 202: <i>Second Appropriation Act 2021-22:</i>	
Second Reading,	441
Bill No. 202: <i>Second Appropriation Act 2021-22:</i>	
Third Reading,	1201
Motion No. 112 - Re coverage for the cystic fibrosis drug Trikafta,	378
Motion No. 167 - Re extending the Special Committee on Electoral Reform's reporting deadline,	560
Motion No. 169 - Re resignation of Deputy Premier from Cabinet,	622
Motion No. 200 - Re Naloxone nasal spray,	850
Motion No. 217 - Re supporting acting chief medical officer of health's recommendations:	
Motion to adjourn debate,	924
Motion No. 236 - Re non-confidence in Government (Negatived),	1047
Motion Respecting Committee Reports No. 1 - Re concurrence in the 1 st Report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges,	1187

DIXON, CURRIE

Questions, oral:

COVID-19 pandemic business relief funding,	810
COVID-19 rapid testing,	947
COVID-19 school protocols,	809
COVID-19 vaccination requirement rollout,	554, 1120, 1150
Health care services,	995
Non-confidence in government,	1026
Physician recruitment and retention,	669, 696, 969, 1022
Political party fundraising,	1181

DIXON, CURRIE *(continued)*

Questions, oral:

Sexual abuse within elementary school,	319, 320, 330, 331, 366, 369, 399, 427, 430, 458, 459, 489, 579, 605, 608
Sexual abuse within elementary school, Child and Youth Advocate review of,	333
Whitehorse Emergency Shelter,	782

Speaks on:

Bill No. 3: <i>Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021):</i> Second Reading,	1165
Bill No. 9: <i>Act to Amend the Cannabis Control and Regulation Act (2021):</i> Second Reading,	493
Bill No. 9: <i>Act to Amend the Cannabis Control and Regulation Act (2021):</i> Third Reading,	1001
Bill No. 202: <i>Second Appropriation Act 2021-22: Second Reading,</i>	359, 438
Ministerial statements:	
COVID-19 vaccine and safety measures,	425
State of emergency in Yukon,	807
Yukon Days,	1180
Yukon Forum,	665
Motion No. 113 - Re amendment to Standing Order 76,	379
Motion No. 200 - Re Naloxone nasal spray,	844
Motion No. 217 - Re supporting acting chief medical officer of health's recommendations,	924
Motion No. 236 - Re non-confidence in Government,	1027, 1046

FILED DOCUMENTS

7. Independent Review - Department of Education - Terms of Reference, letter re (dated October 8, 2021) from Amanda Rogers, Dispute Resolution, to Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education (McLean),	327
8. <i>Yukon Energy 2020 Annual Report</i> (Streicker),	397
9. Energy Retrofit Loan Program/Better Buildings Program, letter re (dated October 6, 2021) from Dan Curtis, Mayor, City of Whitehorse, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (Dixon),	397
10. <i>Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change 2021 - Our Recommendations, Our Future - 27 Programs and Policies to Embolden the Yukon's Climate Action</i> (Clarke, N.),	423
11. Booster shots for Yukoners 65 and older, letter re (dated October 15, 2021) from Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge, to Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Deputy Premier (Cathers),	423

FILED DOCUMENTS *(continued)*

12. Covid Questions from Yukoners, letter re (dated August 31, 2021) from Kate White, Leader of the Third Party, to Hon. Sandy Silver, Premier, and Catherine Elliott, Acting Chief Medical Officer of Health (White), 423
13. *Yukon Geographical Place Names Board 2020-2021 Annual Report* (Pillai), 693
14. School staffing in Watson Lake, letter re (dated August 30, 2021) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Patti McLeod, Member for Watson Lake (McLean), 749
15. Nasal Naloxone, letter re (dated November 8, 2021) from Blood Ties Four Directions Centre, Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, Safe at Home Society Yukon, Yukon Status of Women Council, Women's Transition Home, Challenge Disability Resource Group, Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, and Food Bank Society of Whitehorse, to Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Health and Social Services (White), 779
16. COVID-19 elementary school measures, letter re (dated November 7, 2021) from Fraser Pearce and parents of elementary school children to Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Health and Social Services, Kate White, Leader of the Third Party, Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge, Scott Kent, Member for Copperbelt South, and Annie Blake, Member for Vuntut Gwitchin (White), 779
17. Condensed Timeline with Salient Points, document prepared by the RCMP for meeting with parents at Hidden Valley Elementary School November 9, 2021 (Cathers), 861
18. Draft plan for the Dawson planning region, letter re (dated November 1, 2021) from Hon. John Streicker, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, and Hon. Nils Clarke, Minister of Environment, to the Dawson Regional Planning Commission (Streicker), 861
19. Better Buildings Loan Program, letter re (dated November 6, 2021) from Denny Kobayashi, Executive Director, Yukon Chamber of Commerce, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (Mostyn), 884
20. Government of Yukon Better Buildings Program Announcement, letter re (dated November 1, 2021) from Lars Hartling, Chair, Board of Directors, and Susan Guatto, Executive Director, Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (Mostyn), 884
21. Energy efficiency retrofit financing program, letter re (dated October 18, 2021) from Albert Drapeau, Executive Director, Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (Mostyn), 914
22. Better Buildings Program, letter re (dated October 29, 2021) from Ron Rousseau, President, Yukon Federation of Labour, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (Mostyn), 914

FILED DOCUMENTS *(continued)*

23. Proposed changes to the Municipal Act and Taxation and Assessment Act, letter re (dated November 12, 2021) from Gord Curran, Mayor, Village of Teslin, to Kate White, Leader of the Third Party (White), 914
24. Wildland firefighters, letter re (dated November 12, 2021) from Nicholas O'Carroll, IAFF Local 2217 Whitehorse Firefighters Association, to Kate White, Leader of the Third Party (White), 914
25. *Yukon Lottery Commission Annual Report 2020-21* (Pillai), 914
26. Response to request for analysis re testing as a substitute to vaccination, letter re (dated November 16, 2021) from Paul Moore, Public Service Commissioner, to Yukon Employees' Union and Yukon Teachers' Association (Streicker), 914
27. Better Buildings Program, letter re (dated October 18, 2021) from Chris Rider, Executive Director, CPAWS Yukon, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (Mostyn), 943
28. Formation of Working Group on the Better Building Program, letter re (dated November 21, 2021) from Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services, to Gord Curran, President, Association of Yukon Communities (Mostyn), 967
29. Amending Bill No. 8, *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*, to extend occupational cancer presumptions to wildland forest firefighters, letter re (dated November 22, 2021) from Stephanie Smith, President, BC General Employees' Union, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (White), 967
30. Potential removal of the landlord's right to issue 2- and 3-month notices to vacate, letter re (dated November 25, 2021) from Shannon Teja, President, Yukon Residential Landlord Association, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (Mostyn), 1084
31. Energy Retrofit Loan Program / Better Buildings Program, letter re (dated October 6, 2021) from Dan Curtis, Mayor, City of Whitehorse, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (Dixon), 1084
32. Better Buildings Program, letter re (dated November 25, 2021) from Mayor and Council, Town of Watson Lake, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (McLeod), 1084
33. Proposed changes to the *Municipal Act and Taxation and Assessment Act*, letter re (dated November 25, 2021) from Trevor Ellis, Mayor, Village of Mayo, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (White), 1084
34. Proposed changes to the *Municipal Act and Taxation and Assessment Act*, letter re (dated November 12, 2021) from Gord Curran, Mayor, Village of Teslin, to Kate White, Leader of the Third Party (White), 1084

FILED DOCUMENTS *(continued)*

35. Adult access to Pfizer-BioNTech's Comirnaty COVID-19 Vaccine, letter re (dated November 26, 2021) from Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Health and Social Services, to Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge (Cathers), 1098
36. Bill No. 8, *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*, letter re (dated December 1, 2021) from Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, to Stephanie Smith, BCGEU (Mostyn), 1147
37. Bill No. 3, *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*, letter re (dated December 1, 2021) from Kate White, Leader of the Third Party, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (White), 1147
38. Yukon Government Public Service Commission 2 December 2021 Employee Attestations (Streicker), 1147
39. Yukon Party Support for Extending Cancer Presumption to Wildland Firefighters, letter re (dated November 30, 2021) from Kalin Pallett, President, Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon to Currie Dixon, Leader of the Official Opposition (Mostyn), 1147
40. Bill No. 8, *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*, letter re (dated November 25, 2021) from Frederick Koe, Chair, Board of Directors, Yukon First Nations Wildfire, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (Mostyn), 1147
41. Change of clause 94, Division 4, Bill No. 8, *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*, letter re (dated November 17, 2021) from Chad Thomas, CEO, Yukon First Nations Wildfire, to Kate White, Leader of the Third Party (White), 1147

GOVERNMENT BILLS**Bill No. 3: *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*** (Mostyn)

- Introduction and First Reading, 397
- Second Reading, 1154–1168
- Division, 1168

Bill No. 4: *Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021)* (Clarke, N.)

- Introduction and First Reading, 397
- Second Reading, 462–464
- Division, 464
- Committee of the Whole, 525–530, 672–673
- Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses and title read and agreed to, 673
- Reported without amendment, 689
- Third Reading, 868–869
- Division, 869
- Assent, 1202

GOVERNMENT BILLS *(continued)***Bill No. 5: Act to Amend the Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act (2021)** (Streicker)

Introduction and First Reading,	314
Second Reading,	404–406
Division,	406
Committee of the Whole,	407–417
Reported without amendment,	420
Third Reading,	869–870
Division,	870
Assent,	1202

Bill No. 6: Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021) (McPhee)

Introduction and First Reading,	327
Second Reading,	431–437
Division,	437
Committee of the Whole,	1064–1069, 1197–1199, 1200
Reported without amendment,	1201
Third Reading,	1201–1202
Division,	1202
Assent,	1202

Bill No. 7: Act to Amend the Family Property and Support Act (2021) (McPhee)

Introduction and First Reading,	314
Second Reading,	406–407
Division,	407
Committee of the Whole,	418–419
Reported without amendment,	420
Third Reading,	1063–1064
Division,	1064
Assent,	1202

Bill No. 8: Workers' Safety and Compensation Act (Mostyn)

Introduction and First Reading,	363
Second Reading,	555
Division,	559
Committee of the Whole,	561–572, 1200
Reported without amendment,	1201
Third Reading,	1202
Division,	1202
Assent,	1202

GOVERNMENT BILLS *(continued)*

Bill No. 9: Act to Amend the Cannabis Control and Regulation Act (2021) (Pillai)

Introduction and First Reading, 424
 Second Reading, 493–500
 Division, 501
 Committee of the Whole, 700–706
 Reported without amendment, 718
 Third Reading, 999–1002
 Division, 1002
 Assent, 1202

Bill No. 10: Act to Amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021) (McPhee)

Introduction and First Reading, 424
 Second Reading, 814–815
 Division, 815
 Committee of the Whole, 1003–1004
 Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses and the title read and agreed to, 1004
 Reported without amendment, 1017
 Third Reading, 1092
 Division, 1092
 Assent, 1202

No. 202: Second Appropriation Act 2021-22 (Silver)

Introduction and First Reading, 314
 Second Reading, 336–359, 438–441
 Division, 441
 Committee of the Whole, 442–451, 464–482, 501–514, 584–602, 643–660, 673–689,
 706–717, 728–744, 757–776, 787–802, 815–828, 850–856, 871–881, 891–898,
 925–938, 951–963, 974–988, 1093–1098, 1126–1144, 1169–1174, 1188–1197, 1200
 Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 51 cleared or carried, 799
 Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 18 cleared or carried, 815
 Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 54 cleared or carried, 851
 Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 22 cleared or carried, 852
 Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 53 cleared or carried, 852
 Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 11 cleared or carried, 933
 Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 55 cleared or carried, 936
 Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 3 cleared or carried, 1197
 Reported without amendment, 1201
 Third Reading, 1201
 Division, 1201
 Assent, 1202

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

No. 84 - Re participation in sittings via teleconference (McPhee)	
Notice,	314
Unanimous consent re moving motion without one clear day's notice,	334
Debate,	335
Motion agreed to,	335
No. 85 - Re pairing of members (McPhee)	
Notice,	315
Unanimous consent re moving motion without one clear day's notice,	335
Debate,	335
Motion agreed to,	335
No. 86 - Re members participating via video conference (McPhee)	
Notice,	315
Unanimous consent re moving motion without one clear day's notice,	336
Debate,	336
Motion agreed to,	336
No. 217 - Re supporting acting chief medical officer of health's recommendations	
(Streicker)	
Notice,	861
Debate,	921–924
Debate adjourned (Division) (Dixon),	924
No. 243 - Re appointment of Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators Chief Adjudicator and Deputy Chief Adjudicator (McPhee)	
Notice,	1056
Debate,	1124–1125
Motion agreed to,	1125
No. 244 - Re appointments to the Yukon Human Rights Commission (McPhee)	
Notice,	1056
Debate,	1125
Motion agreed to,	1125
No. 245 - Re appointments to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators (McPhee)	
Notice,	1056
Debate,	1125–1126
Motion agreed to,	1126

HARPER, JEREMY (see SPEAKER)

HASSARD, STACEY

Questions, oral:

Building renovation program,	1023
COVID-19 vaccination requirement rollout,	582, 886, 1124
Faro community support services,	867
Financial support for parent caregivers of children with disabilities,	890
Land development,	949
Land disposition process,	864
Mining assessment process,	1088
Secure medical unit,	642
Sexual abuse within elementary school,	917
Teacher staffing,	973
Weigh station exemption permits,	1153
<i>Workers' Compensation Act</i> amendments,	998

Speaks on:

Bill No. 4: <i>Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021)</i> : Second Reading,	463
Bill No. 4: <i>Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021)</i> : Third Reading,	869

Ministerial statements:

COVID-19 vaccination verification,	1086
Yukon 511 services,	915
Yukon electricity rates,	1118

ISTCHENKO, WADE

Questions, oral:

Biomass heating fuel,	1059
Carbon tax exemptions for home heating,	752
Energy supply and demand,	753
Finlayson caribou herd management,	838
Fuel-wood supply,	523
Rural fire protection services,	919
Rural solid-waste transfer stations,	583, 1025, 1184
Wildlife harvest allocations,	813

Speaks on:

Ministerial statements:

Quill Creek timber harvest plan,	1058
Single-use shopping bags,	364
United Nations Climate Change Conference,	993
Youth Panel on Climate Change,	457
Yukon Climate Leadership Council,	722

KENT, SCOTT

Questions, oral:

COVID-19 rapid testing,	887
Faro area mining claims and leases,	1061
Mining assessment process,	1087
Resource Gateway project,	812
School busing,	1150
Sexual abuse within elementary school,	403, 551, 604
Sexual abuse within elementary school, Child and Youth Advocate review of,	323, 333
Student behavioural issues at Jack Hulland Elementary School, .	461, 491, 520, 724, 754
Teacher staffing,	836, 950

Speaks on:

Bill No. 5 - *Act to Amend the Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act (2021)*: Second Reading, . 405

Bill No. 5: *Act to Amend the Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act (2021)*: Third Reading, 870

Ministerial statements:

Clean energy legislation,	694
Draft Dawson regional land use plan,	780
Robert Service School,	885
Motion No. 84 - Re participation in sittings via teleconference,	334
Motion No. 85 - Re pairing of members,	335
Motion No. 113 - Re amendment to Standing Order 76,	385
Motion No. 243 - Re appointment of Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators Chief Adjudicator and Deputy Chief Adjudicator,	1125

LEGISLATIVE RETURNS

8. Response to Written Question No. 8, Written Question No. 9 and Written Question No. 10 re: compensation for placer and quartz mining claim holders, successor resource legislation, and land withdrawals and staking bans (Streicker),	324
9. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Van Bibber related to a ministerial statement re: Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative (Streicker),	516
10. Response to Written Question No. 7 re: pedestrian-activated crosswalks in Watson Lake (Clarke, N.),	516
11. Response to Written Question No. 12 re: Yukon Resource Gateway project (Clarke, N.),	516
12. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Clarke related to general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 202, <i>Second Appropriation Act 2021-22 - 4th and Jeckell housing project</i> (Pillai),	914

LEGISLATIVE RETURNS *(continued)*

13. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Tredger related to general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22 - demolitions and transition units* (Pillai), 914
14. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Tredger related to general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22 - carbon tax tracking* (Pillai), 967
15. Response to Written Question No. 4 re: Whistle Bend school (McLean), 993
16. Response to Written Question No. 11 re: individualized education plans (McLean), 993
18. Response to matter outstanding from discussion related to the appearance of witnesses from the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board before Committee of the Whole on November 25, 2021 (Mostyn), 1147
19. Response to Written Question No. 1 re: court cases involving the Government of Yukon and Written Question No. 2 re: legislative drafting (McPhee), 1178
20. Response to Written Question No. 6 re: Whistle Bend Place (McPhee), 1178
21. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to general debate on Vote 53, Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22 - Vangorda* (Streicker), 1178
22. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. White related to general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22 - clearing along Robert Service Way* (Streicker), 1178
23. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Dixon related to general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22 - carbon credits* (Streicker), 1178
24. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. White related to general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22 - public information sessions* (Streicker), 1178
25. Response to oral question from Ms. Van Bibber re: school zone safety (Clarke, N.), 1178
26. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. White related to general debate on Vote 3, Education, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22 - Old Crow staffing* (McLean), 1178
27. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to general debate on Vote 3, Education, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22 - bus arrival standards* (McLean), 1178
28. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to general debate on Vote 3, Education, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22 - bus arrival standards* (McLean), 1178

LEGISLATIVE RETURNS *(continued)*

29. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to general debate on Vote 3, Education, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* - educational assistants (McLean), 1178
30. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to general debate on Vote 3, Education, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* - staffing reporting tool (McLean), 1178
31. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. White related to general debate on Vote 3, Education, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* - staff vaccination attestation (McLean), 1178
32. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. White related to general debate on Vote 3, Education, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* - adult learning supports and programs (McLean), 1178

McLEAN, JEANIE

Speaks on:

- Bill No. 202: *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*: Second Reading, 351
- Ministerial statements:
- LGBTQ2S+ inclusion action plan, 518, 519
- Robert Service School, 884, 886
- Motion No. 112 - Re coverage for the cystic fibrosis drug Trikafta, 377
- Motion No. 169 - Re resignation of Deputy Premier from Cabinet, 612
- Motion No. 200 - Re Naloxone nasal spray, 844
- Motion No. 236 - Re non-confidence in Government, 1038

McLEOD, PATTI

Questions, oral:

- Condominium insurance costs, 1185
- First Nation school governance, 786, 835
- Forestry industry, 1122
- Magnetic resonance imaging program, 698
- Midwifery legislation, 996
- Pedestrian-actiuated street lights in Watson Lake, 889
- Teacher staffing, 726
- Watson Lake continuing care, 639

McLEOD, PATTI (*continued*)

Speaks on:

Bill No. 3: <i>Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act</i> (2021): Second Reading,	1158
Bill No. 8: <i>Workers' Safety and Compensation Act: Second Reading</i> ,	557
Ministerial statements:	
Emergency medical services,	487
Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in youth centre,	750

McPHEE, TRACY-ANNE

Speaks on:

Bill No. 6: <i>Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021):</i> Second Reading,	432, 437
Bill No. 7: <i>Act to Amend the Family Property and Support Act (2021):</i> Second Reading,	406, 407
Bill No. 7: <i>Act to Amend the Family Property and Support Act (2021):</i> Third Reading,	1063
Bill No. 10: <i>Act to Amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021):</i> Second Reading,	814, 815
Bill No. 10: <i>Act to Amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021):</i> Third Reading,	1092
Bill No. 202: <i>Second Appropriation Act 2021-22: Second Reading</i> ,	346
Ministerial statements:	
Copper Ridge Place renovation,	577, 579
COVID-19 vaccination requirements,	833, 835
COVID-19 vaccinations for youth,	967, 968
COVID-19 vaccine and safety measures,	424, 426
COVID-19 vaccine booster shots,	637, 639
Prenatal nutrition program,	944, 945
Motion No. 84 - Re participation in sittings via teleconference,	334
Motion No. 85 - Re pairing of members,	335
Motion No. 86 - Re members participating via video conference,	336
Motion No. 112 - Re coverage for the cystic fibrosis drug Trikafta,	371
Motion No. 200 - Re Naloxone nasal spray,	848
Motion No. 243 - Re appointment of Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators Chief Adjudicator and Deputy Chief Adjudicator,	1124
Motion No. 244 - Re appointments to the Yukon Human Rights Commission,	1125
Motion No. 245 - Re appointments to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators, ..	1126

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Clarke, Nils

COVID-19 vaccination verification (Hassard/White),	1085
Single-use shopping bags (Istchenko/Tredger),	364
United Nations Climate Change Conference (Istchenko/Tredger),	993
Youth Panel on Climate Change (Istchenko/White),	456
Yukon 511 services (Hassard/Tredger),	914
Yukon Climate Leadership Council (Istchenko/Tredger),	721

McLean, Jeanie

LGBTQ2S+ inclusion action plan (Clarke, Y./Tredger),	518
Robert Service School (Kent/White),	884

McPhee, Tracy-Anne

Copper Ridge Place renovation (Cathers/Tredger),	577
COVID-19 vaccination requirements (Cathers/White),	833
COVID-19 vaccinations for youth (Cathers/Blake),	967
COVID-19 vaccine and safety measures (Dixon/White),	424
COVID-19 vaccine booster shots (Cathers/Blake),	637
Prenatal nutrition program (Cathers/Blake),	944

Mostyn, Richard

Emergency medical services (McLeod/White),	486
Flooding in Yukon (Cathers/White),	328
State of emergency in Yukon (Dixon/White),	806
Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in youth centre (McLeod/Blake),	749

Pillai, Ranj

Creative and cultural industries strategy (Van Bibber/Blake),	1148
Great Yukon Summer Freeze program (Van Bibber/Blake),	549
Housing initiatives fund (Clarke, Y./Tredger),	862
Yukon housing summit (Clarke, Y./Tredger),	317

Silver, Sandy

Yukon Days (Dixon/White),	1180
Yukon Forum (Dixon/White),	664

Streicker, John

Battery energy storage system project (Van Bibber/Tredger),	1021
Clean energy legislation (Kent/White),	694
Draft Dawson regional land use plan (Kent/White),	780
Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative (Van Bibber/Tredger),	398
Quill Creek timber harvest plan (Istchenko/White),	1057
Yukon electricity rates (Hassard/Tredger),	1118

MOMENT OF SILENCE OBSERVED

In honour of Remembrance Day,	831
In recognition of shooting incident in Faro,	603

MOSTYN, RICHARD

Speaks on:

Bill No. 3: <i>Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act</i> (2021): Second Reading,	1154, 1167
Bill No. 8: <i>Workers' Safety and Compensation Act: Second Reading</i> ,	555, 558
Bill No. 202: <i>Second Appropriation Act 2021-22: Second Reading</i> ,	352
Ministerial statements:	
Emergency medical services,	486, 488
Flooding in Yukon,	328, 329
State of emergency in Yukon,	806, 808
Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in youth centre,	749, 750
Motion No. 112 - Re coverage for the cystic fibrosis drug Trikafta,	374
Motion No. 113 - Re amendment to Standing Order 76,	390
Motion No. 168 - Re reviewing social assistance rates,	632
Motion No. 169 - Re resignation of Deputy Premier from Cabinet,	616
Motion No. 200 - Re Naloxone nasal spray,	846
Motion No. 236 - Re non-confidence in Government,	1040
Motion Respecting Committee Reports No. 1 - Re concurrence in the 1 st Report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges,	1186, 1187

MOTIONS (see GOVERNMENT MOTIONS, MOTIONS OF URGENT AND PRESSING NECESSITY, MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS, MOTIONS RESPECTING COMMITTEE REPORTS and MOTIONS, WITHDRAWAL OF)

MOTIONS IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

No. 1 - Re appearance of witnesses from Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation (Streicker)	
Moved,	525
Motion agreed to,	525
No. 2 - Re appearance of witnesses from Yukon Hospital Corporation (Streicker)	
Moved,	891
Motion agreed to,	891
No. 3 - Re appearance of witnesses from Yukon University (Streicker)	
Moved,	1003
Motion agreed to,	1003

MOTIONS IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE *(continued)*

No. 4 - Re appearance of witnesses from Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board (Streicker)	
Moved,	1064
Motion agreed to,	1064
No. 5 - Re appearance of witnesses from the Office of Yukon Chief Medical Officer of Health (Streicker)	
Moved,	1093
Motion agreed to,	1093

MOTIONS OF URGENT AND PRESSING NECESSITY

No. 4 - Re sexual abuse within elementary school (Dixon)	
Unanimous consent to move and debate motion pursuant to Standing Order 28 requested (not granted),	319

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

No. 112 - Re coverage for the cystic fibrosis drug Trikafta (Blake)	
Notice,	317
Debate,	370–378
Motion agreed to (Division),	378
No. 113 - Re amendment to Standing Order 76 (Dixon)	
Notice,	324
Debate,	379–393
Amendment proposed (Mostyn),	392
Debate adjourned on motion and amendment (Time expired) (Pillai),	393
Amendment removed from Order Paper,	859
No. 167 - Re extending the Special Committee on Electoral Reform's reporting deadline (White)	
Notice,	549
Unanimous consent re moving motion without one clear day's notice,	560
Debate,	560
Motion agreed to (Division),	561
No. 168 - Re reviewing social assistance rates (Blake)	
Notice,	549
Debate,	622–632
Debate adjourned on motion and amendment (Time expired) (Mostyn),	633

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS *(continued)*

No. 169 - Re resignation of Deputy Premier from Cabinet (Cathers)

 Notice, 573

 Debate, 609–622

 Motion agreed to (Division), 622

No. 200 - Re Naloxone nasal spray (White)

 Notice, 802

 Debate, 839–849

 Motion agreed to (Division), 850

No. 236 - Re non-confidence in Government (Dixon)

 Notice, 967

 Debate, 1027–1047

 Motion negatived (Division), 1047

No. 239 - Re establishing a publicly funded community walk-in clinic (White)

 Notice, 989

 Debate, 1047–1052

 Debate adjourned (Time expired) (McPhee), 1052

MOTIONS RESPECTING COMMITTEE REPORTS

No. 1 - Re concurrence in the 1st Report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges (Streicker)

 Notice, 363

 Notice to call motion as government-designated business (McPhee), 1154

 Debate, 1186–1187

 Motion agreed to (Division), 1187

MOTIONS, WITHDRAWAL OF

Blake

 Motion No. 19, 311

 Motion No. 83 (not placed on Notice Paper), 311

 Motion No. 174 (not placed on Notice Paper), 311

 Motion No. 224, 1145

 Motion No. 237 (not placed on Notice Paper), 991

 Motion No. 253 (not placed on Notice Paper), 1083

Cathers

 Motion No. 81 (not placed on Notice Paper), 311

 Motion No. 138, 913

MOTIONS, WITHDRAWAL OF *(continued)*

Cathers	
Motion No. 157,	663
Motion No. 187 (not placed on Notice Paper),	777
Motion No. 195,	859
Motion No. 246 (not placed on Notice Paper),	1083
Motion No. 266 (not placed on Notice Paper),	1145
Clarke, Y.	
Motion No. 158,	719
Dixon	
Motion No. 27,	311
Motion No. 170 (not placed on Notice Paper),	603
Motion No. 209 (not placed on Notice Paper),	859
Hassard	
Motions No. 160 and 161,	719
Motion No. 162,	859
Istchenko	
Motion No. 164,	719
Kent	
Motion No. 153,	575
McLeod	
Motion No. 52,	311
Motion No. 90,	421
Motion No. 159,	719
Motions No. 232 and 233,	965
Tredger	
Motion No. 131,	965
Van Bibber	
Motion No. 143,	547
Motion No. 188,	1145
White	
Motion No. 45,	311
Motion No. 117 (not placed on Notice Paper),	361
Motion No. 126,	421
Motions No. 192 and 193,	859
Motion No. 212 (not placed on Notice Paper),	859
Motion No. 221,	1083
Motion No. 229,	1145

NOTICE OF PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Opposition private members' business

Order of business for October 14, 2021 (Tredger/Kent), 334
 Order of business for October 27, 2021 (Kent/Tredger), 584
 Point of personal privilege re correction (Tredger), 603
 Order of business for November 10, 2021 (Tredger/Kent), 814
 Order of business for November 24, 2021 (Kent/Tredger), 999

NOVAK, JOSEPH

Remarks re Remembrance Day, 829

PETITIONS

No. 1 - Re climate change lens (Tredger)

Presented, 281
 Received, 314
 Response (Streicker), 516

No. 2 - Re financial support for full-time parent caregivers of children with disabilities (Blake)

Presented, 281
 Received, 314
 Response (McPhee), 517
 Additional signatures presented, 518

No. 3 - Re sexual assault at Hidden Valley Elementary School (Cathers)

Presented, 423
 Received, 456
 Additional signatures presented, 486, 806
 Response (McLean), 663

No. 4 - Re continuing care facility in Watson Lake (McLeod)

Presented, 577
 Received, 604
 Response (McPhee), 805

No. 5 - Re mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations (McLeod)

Presented, 664
 Received, 693
 Additional signatures presented, 828
 Response (Silver), 831

PETITIONS *(continued)*

No. 6 - Re self-isolation and COVID-19 rapid-testing protocols for schools (White)	
Presented,	832
Received,	861
Response (McPhee),	1055
No. 7 - Re declaring a state of emergency in Mayo (White)	
Presented,	914
Received,	943
Response (McPhee),	1084
No. 8 - Re protecting tenants by preventing evictions without cause (Tredger)	
Presented,	1117
Received,	1147
Response (Mostyn),	1178

PILLAI, RANJ

Speaks on:

Bill No. 3: <i>Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act</i> (2021): Second Reading,		1162
Bill No. 9: <i>Act to Amend the Cannabis Control and Regulation Act (2021):</i> Second Reading,		493, 499
Bill No. 9: <i>Act to Amend the Cannabis Control and Regulation Act (2021):</i> Third Reading,		999, 1001
Bill No. 202: <i>Second Appropriation Act 2021-22: Second Reading,</i>		357
Ministerial statements:		
Creative and cultural industries strategy,	1148, 1149	
Great Yukon Summer Freeze program,	549, 550	
Housing initiatives fund,	862, 863	
Yukon housing summit,	317, 318	
Motion No. 112 - Re coverage for the cystic fibrosis drug Trikafta,	375	
Motion No. 113 - Re amendment to Standing Order 76,	392	
Motion No. 168 - Re reviewing social assistance rates,	624	
Motion No. 169 - Re resignation of Deputy Premier from Cabinet,	617	
Motion No. 236 - Re non-confidence in Government,	1036	

POINTS OF ORDER

Re accusing a member of uttering a deliberate falsehood (Cathers),	755
Speaker's ruling,	755, 782
Re accusing a member of uttering a deliberate falsehood (Streicker),	917
Speaker's ruling (defers ruling),	917
Speaker's ruling,	946
Re accusing a member of uttering a deliberate falsehood (Cathers),	1043
Speaker's statement (defers ruling),	1043
Speaker's ruling,	1092
Re members not to involve the Speaker in debate (Cathers),	1033
Speaker's ruling,	1033
Re members not to refer to members by name (Kent),	1035, 1036
Speaker's ruling,	1035, 1036
Re referring to a matter that is sub judice (McPhee),	321
Speaker's ruling,	321
Re relevance, imputing unavowed motives and using insulting language (Cathers),	845
Speaker's ruling,	845
Re relevance - length of remarks in raising a question of privilege (Silver),	671
Deputy Speaker's statement,	671
Re relevance - motion (White),	844
Speaker's ruling,	844

PRIVILEGE, POINTS OF PERSONAL

Re correction re Notice of Private Members' Business (Tredger),	603
---	-----

PRIVILEGE, QUESTION OF

Re social media advertisement by the Hon. Mr. Mostyn, Minister of Community Services presuming the passage of a bill (Cathers),	670
Deputy Speaker's statement (defers ruling),	671
Speaker's ruling (no prima facie breach of privilege or prima facie contempt),	755
Re social media advertisement by the Hon. Mr. Mostyn, Minister of Community Services, presuming the passage of a bill (Cathers),	670

QUESTIONS - ORAL

Affordable housing	
(Clarke, Y.),	863
(Tredger),	429, 641, 1151
(White),	553
Biomass heating fuel (Istchenko),	1059
Building renovation program	
(Hassard),	1023
(White),	668, 1090
Carbon tax exemptions for home heating (Istchenko),	752
Chief medical officer of health authority	
(Tredger),	785
(White),	606
<i>Child and Family Services Act</i> review (Clarke, Y.),	783
Condominium insurance costs (McLeod),	1185
COVID-19 pandemic business relief funding (Dixon),	810
COVID-19 rapid testing	
(Dixon),	947
(Kent),	887
(White),	866
COVID-19 school protocols	
(Dixon),	809
(White),	784
COVID-19 testing (Blake),	865
COVID-19 vaccination requirement rollout	
(Dixon),	554, 1120, 1150
(Hassard),	582, 886, 1124
(Van Bibber),	1182
COVID-19 vaccine and safety measures	
(Clarke),	919
(Tredger),	948
(White),	725
Domestic violence support for women (Blake),	888
Economic development fund (Van Bibber),	1122
Energy supply and demand (Istchenko),	753
Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport reopening of international travel (Van Bibber), ..	839, 1122
Faro area mining claims and leases (Kent),	1061

QUESTIONS – ORAL *(continued)*

Faro community support services	
(Hassard),	867
(White),	918
Financial support for parent caregivers of children with disabilities (Hassard),	890
Finlayson caribou herd management (Istchenko),	838
First Nation school governance (McLeod),	786, 835
Forestry industry (McLeod),	1122
Fuel-wood supply (Istchenko),	523
Health care services	
(Blake),	972, 1183
(Dixon),	995
(Tredger),	490
(White),	837
Individualized education plans (Van Bibber),	462
Internet connectivity (Tredger),	1024
Land development (Hassard),	949
Land disposition process (Hassard),	864
Magnetic resonance imaging program (McLeod),	698
Mayo drinking water reservoir (Van Bibber),	1059
Midwifery legislation	
(Blake),	811
(Clarke, Y.),	1120
(McLeod),	996
Mining assessment process	
(Hassard),	1088
(Kent),	1087
Mining project oversight (White),	522, 1060
Non-confidence in government (Dixon),	1026
Obstetric and gynecological care (Clarke, Y.),	642, 667, 697
Old Crow water deliver (Tredger),	697
Opioid crisis	
(Blake),	1089
(White),	971, 1153
Pedestrian-activated street lights in Watson Lake (McLeod),	889

QUESTIONS – ORAL *(continued)*

Physician recruitment and retention	
(Blake),	581
(Cathers),	521, 640, 946
(Dixon),	669, 696, 969, 1022
Political party fundraising	
(Cathers),	1062, 1121, 1152
(Dixon),	1181
Psychology profession regulation (Clarke, Y.),	997
Resource Gateway project (Kent),	812
Ross River School (Van Bibber),	1152
Rural fire protection services (Istchenko),	919
Rural solid-waste transfer stations (Istchenko),	583, 1025, 1184
Safe at Home plan (Blake),	553
School busing (Kent),	1150
School staff shortage (White),	460
School zone safety (Van Bibber),	920
Secure medical unit (Hassard),	642
Sexual abuse within elementary school	
(Blake),	367
(Cathers),	322, 366, 368, 400, 402, 428, 488, 552, 580, 607, 666, 916
(Dixon),	319, 320, 330, 331, 366, 369, 399, 427, 430, 458, 459, 489, 579, 605, 608
(Hassard),	917
(Kent),	403, 551, 604
(White),	321, 332, 401, 429
Sexual abuse within elementary school, Child and Youth Advocate review of	
(Dixon),	333
(Kent),	323, 333
Sexual assault cases (Clarke, Y.),	492
Social assistance rates (Blake),	752
Species at risk legislation (Tredger),	668
Student behavioural issues at Jack Hulland Elementary School	
(Kent),	461, 491, 520, 724, 754
(Van Bibber),	723
Student psychoeducational assessments (Clarke, Y.),	727

QUESTIONS – ORAL *(continued)*

Teacher staffing	
(Hassard),	973
(Kent),	836, 950
(McLeod),	726
Watson Lake continuing care (McLeod),	639
Weigh station exemption permits (Hassard),	1153
Whistle Bend school (Clarke, Y.),	1091
Whitehorse Emergency Shelter	
(Dixon),	782
(Van Bibber),	751
Wildland firefighters workers' compensation coverage (White),	996
Wildlife harvest allocations (Istchenko),	813
<i>Workers' Compensation Act</i> amendments (Hassard),	998
Youth Panel on Climate Change recommendations (Tredger),	1123
Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues membership (Clarke, Y.),	524
Yukon Hospital Corporation funding (Cathers),	699

QUESTIONS - WRITTEN

Re: clearance times at the Fraser border crossing (Kent),	1204
---	------

RECESS

Recess called by Deputy Speaker due to disorder in the gallery	663
--	-----

SESSIONAL ORDERS

Motion No. 84 - Re participation in sittings via teleconference,	335
Motion No. 85 - Re pairing of members,	335
Motion No. 86 - Re members participating via video conference,	336

SESSIONAL PAPERS

9. <i>Report from the Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly on the Absence of Members from Sittings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees</i> (October 7, 2021) (Speaker Harper), ..	313
10. <i>Report of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly - Membership of the Special Committee on Electoral Reform</i> (October 7, 2021) (Speaker Harper),	313
11. <i>Yukon Conflict of Interest Commission Annual Report to the Legislative Assembly for the Period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021</i> (Speaker Harper),	313

SESSIONAL PAPERS *(continued)*

12. <i>Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Legislative Assembly of Yukon - Mental Health Services in Rural Yukon - Department of Health and Social Services</i> (June 7, 2021) (Speaker Harper),	313
13. <i>Report of the Chief Electoral Officer to the Legislative Assembly - 2020 Annual Revenue Returns Contributions Made to Political Parties - January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020</i> (Speaker Harper),	313
14. <i>Getting Ahead of the Curve: Meeting the challenges to privacy and fairness arising from the use of artificial intelligence in the public sector - Joint Special Report No. 2 June 2021 - Ombudsperson British Columbia, Office of the Information & Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia, Yukon Ombudsman, Yukon Information and Privacy Commissioner</i> (Speaker Harper),	313
15. <i>First Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees</i> (July 27, 2021) (Clarke, N.),	314
16. <i>First Report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges</i> (October 7, 2021) (Mostyn),	314
17. <i>Yukon Development Corporation 2020 Annual Report</i> (Streicker),	397
18. <i>First Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts</i> (October 2021) (Dixon),	423
19. <i>Second Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees</i> (October 18, 2021) (Clarke, N.),	423
20. <i>Cannabis Yukon Annual report - Yukon Liquor Corporation - April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021</i> (Pillai),	455
21. <i>Yukon Arts Centre 2020/21 Annual Report</i> (Pillai),	486
22. <i>Government of Yukon Financial Accounting Report - For the period of April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021 - Mercer</i> (September 22, 2021) (Silver),	516
23. <i>Yukon Heritage Resources Board Annual Report April 1, 2020 - March 31, 2021</i> (Pillai), ..	548
24. <i>Yukon Hospitals Year in Review 2020-21</i> (McPhee),	633
25. <i>Yukon Public Accounts 2020-21</i> (Silver),	637
26. <i>Yukon Hospital Corporation Consolidated Financial Statements March 31, 2021</i> (McPhee), ...	663
27. <i>Yukon University 2020-2021 Annual Report</i> (McLean),	693
28. <i>Zoom in On Children's Rights: 2020/2021 Annual Report - Yukon Child & Youth Advocate Office</i> (Speaker Harper),	749
29. <i>Yukon Liquor Corporation Annual report — April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021</i> (Pillai),	884
30. <i>Yukon Housing Corporation Annual Report - For the year ended March 31, 2021</i> (Pillai),	943
31. <i>Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Tredger related to general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 202, Second Appropriation Act 2021-22 - carbon tax tracking</i> (Pillai),	1017

SESSIONAL PAPERS *(continued)*

32. <i>Yukon state of the environment interim report 2021 - A report on environmental indicators</i> (Clarke, N.),	1147
33. <i>Crime Prevention & Victim Services Trust Fund Annual report 2020-21</i> (McPhee),	1147
34. <i>Health Care Insurance Programs - Health Services - Fiscal Years 2011-12 to 2020-21- Annual Report April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021</i> (McPhee),	1178
35. <i>Yukon Public Service Labour Relations Board Annual Report 2020-2021</i> (Streicker),	1178
36. <i>Yukon Teachers Labour Relations Board Annual Report 2020-2021</i> (Streicker),	1178
37. <i>Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Annual Report 2020-2021</i> (McLean),	1178

SILVER, SANDY

Speaks on:

Bill No. 202: <i>Second Appropriation Act 2021-22: Second Reading</i> ,	336, 440
Ministerial statements:	
Yukon Days,	1180, 1181
Yukon Forum,	664, 665
Motion No. 113 - Re amendment to Standing Order 76,	386
Motion No. 169 - Re resignation of Deputy Premier from Cabinet,	620
Motion No. 236 - Re non-confidence in Government,	1043

SITTING DAYS

No. 12 October 7, 2021 (Thursday),	311–324
No. 13 October 12, 2021 (Tuesday),	325–360
No. 14 October 13, 2021 (Wednesday),	361–393
No. 15 October 14, 2021 (Thursday),	395–420
No. 16 October 18, 2021 (Monday),	421–452
No. 17 October 19, 2021 (Tuesday),	453–482
No. 18 October 20, 2021 (Wednesday),	483–514
No. 19 October 21, 2021 (Thursday),	515–545
No. 20 October 25, 2021 (Monday),	547–573
No. 21 October 26, 2021 (Tuesday),	575–602
No. 22 October 27, 2021 (Wednesday),	603–633
No. 23 October 28, 2021 (Thursday),	635–661
No. 24 November 1, 2021 (Monday),	663–689
No. 25 November 2, 2021 (Tuesday),	691–718
No. 26 November 3, 2021 (Wednesday),	719–745
No. 27 November 4, 2021 (Thursday),	747–776
No. 28 November 8, 2021 (Monday),	777–802

SITTING DAYS (*continued*)

No. 29 November 9, 2021 (Tuesday),	803–828
No. 30 November 10, 2021 (Wednesday),	829–856
No. 31 November 15, 2021 (Monday),	859–881
No. 32 November 16, 2021 (Tuesday),	883–912
No. 33 November 17, 2021 (Wednesday),	913–939
No. 34 November 18, 2021 (Thursday),	941–963
No. 35 November 22, 2021 (Monday),	965–989
No. 36 November 23, 2021 (Tuesday),	991–1017
No. 37 November 24, 2021 (Wednesday),	1019–1052
No. 38 November 25, 2021 (Thursday),	1053–1082
No. 39 November 29, 2021 (Monday),	1083–1113
No. 40 November 30, 2021 (Tuesday),	1115–1144
No. 41 December 1, 2021 (Wednesday),	1145–1175
No. 42 December 2, 2021 (Thursday),	1177–1204

SITTING LENGTH

Government House Leader's report on (McPhee),	431
---	-----

SPEAKER (see also DEPUTY SPEAKER, SPEAKER'S RULINGS and SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS)

Absent,	663, 691
Introductions	
King, Annette,	941
Minet, Chantai,	941
Pages,	311
Tables documents,	313, 749

SPEAKER'S RULINGS (see also Deputy Speaker's rulings)

Re accusing a member of uttering a deliberate falsehood,	755, 782, 946, 1092
Re members not to involve the Speaker in debate,	1033, 1035
Re members not to refer to members by name,	1035, 1036
Re question of privilege re social media advertisement by the Hon. Mr. Mostyn, Minister of Community Services, presuming the passage of a bill (no prima facie breach of privilege or prima facie contempt),	755
Re referring to a matter that is sub judice,	321
Re relevance, imputing unavowed motives and using insulting language,	845
Re relevance - motion,	844

SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS (see also Deputy Speaker's statements and Acting Speaker's statements)

Re Child Day, National, recognition of,	941
Re members not to involve the Speaker in debate,	971
Re members restricted to providing dates and a brief description when tabling documents,	749
Re Obuds Day, recognition of,	395
Re Remembrance Day, recognition of,	829
Re shooting incident in Faro, recognition of,	603
Re use of "gaslighting,"	607
Re visitors in the gallery not to participate in proceedings,	972, 1022
Re visitors in the gallery required to wear masks,	1025
Re volume of off-mic comments interfering with ability to hear,	460

SPECIAL COMMITTEES (see COMMITTEES, SPECIAL)**STREICKER, JOHN**

Speaks on:

Bill No. 3: <i>Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)</i> : Second Reading,	1163
Bill No. 5 - <i>Act to Amend the Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act (2021)</i> : Second Reading,	404, 406
Bill No. 5: <i>Act to Amend the Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act (2021)</i> : Third Reading,	869, 870
Bill No. 9: <i>Act to Amend the Cannabis Control and Regulation Act (2021)</i> : Second Reading,	497
Bill No. 9: <i>Act to Amend the Cannabis Control and Regulation Act (2021)</i> : Third Reading,	1001
Bill No. 202: <i>Second Appropriation Act 2021-22</i> : Second Reading,	355
Ministerial statements:	
Battery energy storage system project,	1021
Clean energy legislation,	694, 695
Draft Dawson regional land use plan,	780, 781
Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative,	398, 399
Quill Creek timber harvest plan,	1057, 1058
Yukon electricity rates,	1118, 1119
Motion No. 113 - Re amendment to Standing Order 76,	380
Motion No. 169 - Re resignation of Deputy Premier from Cabinet,	619
Motion No. 200 - Re Naloxone nasal spray,	842
Motion No. 217 - Re supporting acting chief medical officer of health's recommendations, ..	921

STREICKER, JOHN (*continued*)

Speaks on:

Motion No. 236 - Re non-confidence in Government,	1028
Motion Respecting Committee Reports No. 1 - Re concurrence in the 1 st Report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges,	1186

TERMINATION OF SITTING

As per Standing Order 76(1),	1199
As per Standing Order 76(2),	1201

TREDGER, EMILY (see also DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE)

Questions, oral:

Affordable housing,	641, 1151
Chief medical officer of health authority,	785
COVID-19 vaccine and safety measures,	948
Health care services,	490
Internet connectivity,	1024
Old Crow water deliver,	697
Species at risk legislation,	668
Youth Panel on Climate Change recommendations,	1123

Speaks on:

Bill No. 3: <i>Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act</i> (2021): Second Reading,	1158
Bill No. 4: <i>Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021):</i> Second Reading,	463
Bill No. 4: <i>Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021):</i> Third Reading,	869
Bill No. 9: <i>Act to Amend the Cannabis Control and Regulation Act (2021):</i> Second Reading,	497
Bill No. 9: <i>Act to Amend the Cannabis Control and Regulation Act (2021):</i> Third Reading,	1001
Bill No. 202: <i>Second Appropriation Act 2021-22:</i> Second Reading,	440

Ministerial statements:

Battery energy storage system project,	1021
Copper Ridge Place renovation,	578
Housing initiatives fund,	862
Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative,	399
LGBTQ2S+ inclusion action plan,	519
Single-use shopping bags,	364
United Nations Climate Change Conference,	994

TREDGER, EMILY *(continued)*

Speaks on:

Ministerial statements:

Yukon 511 services,	915
Yukon Climate Leadership Council,	722
Yukon electricity rates,	1119
Yukon housing summit,	318
Motion No. 112 - Re coverage for the cystic fibrosis drug Trikafta,	373
Motion No. 169 - Re resignation of Deputy Premier from Cabinet,	612
Motion No. 200 - Re Naloxone nasal spray,	846
Motion Respecting Committee Reports No. 1 - Re concurrence in the 1 st Report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges,	1186

TRIBUTES

16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, recognition of (McLean/Clarke/Tredger), ..	1053
Adoption Awareness Month, recognition of (McPhee/Van Bibber),	1054
AIDS Day, World, recognition of (McLean/Cathers/Tredger),	1146
Art collection, Yukon permanent, recognition of (Pillai/Van Bibber/Blake),	1116
Breast Cancer Awareness Month, recognition of (McPhee/McLeod/Blake),	325
Cable, Jack, remembrance of (Silver/Van Bibber/White),	362
Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week, recognition of (Mostyn/Clarke, Y.),	747
Community Safety and Crime Prevention Month, National, recognition of (McPhee/Cathers),	720
COVID-19 vaccination teams, recognition of (McPhee/Cathers/White),	1115
Diabetes Day, World, recognition of (McPhee/Kent/Blake),	860
Flood response volunteers, recognition of (Mostyn/Cathers/White),	547
Francophone Immigration Week, National, recognition of (Streicker/Clarke, Y./White),	803
Handwashing Day, Global, recognition of (McPhee),	396
Highways maintenance crews, recognition of (Clarke, N./Hassard/Tredger),	1083
Housing Day, National, recognition of (Pillai/Clarke/Tredger),	965
Indigenous Veterans Day, National, recognition of (McLean/Istchenko/Blake),	777
Innovation Commission, recognition of (Pillai),	859
Learning Disabilities Awareness Month, recognition of (McLean/Van Bibber/Tredger),	575
Legislative counsel office staff, recognition of (McPhee/Cathers/White),	1177
Library Month, Canadian and Libraries Week, Yukon, recognition of (Mostyn/McLeod/White),	515
MADD Project Red Ribbon campaign, recognition of (Clarke, N./Hassard/Tredger),	719
Make a Will Month, recognition of (McPhee/Cathers/Tredger),	942
Media Literacy Week, recognition of (Mostyn/Clarke, Y./Tredger),	605

TRIBUTES *(continued)*

Mental Health Day, World, recognition of (McPhee/Cathers/White), 326

Movember, recognition of (Clarke), 1019

Municipal elections, recognition of (Mostyn/McLeod/Tredger), 396

Opioid crisis victims, recognition of (McPhee/Van Bibber/White), 1145

Paralympians, Canadian, Jessica Frotten and Stephanie Dixon, recognition of
(Mostyn/McLeod/White), 913

Patient Safety Week, Canadian, recognition of (McPhee/Cathers/Blake), 576

Persons Day, recognition of (McPhee/Clarke, Y./Tredger), 421

Podcast Award winners, Canadian, recognition of (Mostyn/Tredger), 636

Porcupine caribou herd, recognition of (Clarke, N./Blake), 804

Poverty and Homelessness Action Week, recognition of (Pillai/Clarke, Y./Tredger), 453

Radon Action Month, recognition of (Pillai/Clarke, Y./Tredger), 1019

Remembrance Day, recognition of (Silver/Istchenko/White), 830

Restorative Justice Week, recognition of (McPhee/Cathers/Blake), 991

Robert E. Leckie Awards recipients, recognition of (Streicker), 992

Royal Canadian Legion’s annual poppy campaign, recognition of (Silver/Istchenko/White), 635

Skilled Trade and Technology Week, National, recognition of (McLean/Van Bibber/White), 748

Small Business Week, recognition of (Pillai/Van Bibber/Tredger), 422

Staples, Lindsay, recognition of (Clarke, N./White), 691

Tolerance and Transgender Day of Remembrance, International Day for, recognition of
(McLean/Istchenko/Tredger), 883

Veterans’ mental health services, recognition of (McPhee), 778

Visual Arts, Yukon Prize for, recognition of (Pillai/Clarke/White), 966

Waste Reduction Week, recognition of (Clarke, N./Istchenko/White), 454

Wildland Fire Management, recognition of (Mostyn/McLeod/White), 484

Women’s History Month and Girl Child, International Day of, recognition of
(McLean/Clarke, Y./Tredger), 312

Workplace Bullying Awareness Week, recognition of (Streicker/Van Bibber/Tredger), 483

Wounded Warriors Canada, recognition of (Istchenko), 779

Yukon Geoscience Forum, recognition of (Pillai/Istchenko), 942

Yukoner Appreciation Week and Buy Local November, recognition of
(Pillai/Van Bibber/Tredger), 692

UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Bill No. 4: *Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021)*
 Re deeming all clauses and title read and agreed to, 673

Bill No. 202: *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*
 Re deeming all lines in Vote 3 cleared or carried, 1197
 Re deeming all lines in Vote 11 cleared or carried, 933
 Re deeming all lines in Vote 18 cleared or carried, 815

Bill No. 202: *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*
 Re deeming all lines in Vote 22 cleared or carried, 852
 Re deeming all lines in Vote 51 cleared or carried, 799
 Re deeming all lines in Vote 53 cleared or carried, 852
 Re deeming all lines in Vote 54 cleared or carried, 851
 Re deeming all lines in Vote 55 cleared or carried, 936

Motion No. 84
 Re moving motion without one clear day's notice, 334

Motion No. 85
 Re moving motion without one clear day's notice, 335

Motion No. 86
 Re moving motion without one clear day's notice, 336

Motion of Urgent and Pressing Necessity No. 4 re sexual abuse within elementary school
 Re moving and debating (not granted), 319

Re moving without notice a motion to extend the Special Committee on Electoral Reform's
 reporting deadline (not granted), 324, 407

Re moving without notice a motion to extend the Special Committee on Electoral Reform's
 reporting deadline, 560

Re re including comments by Joseph Novak in November 10, 2021 Hansard, 868

UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

"gaslighting," 607

VAN BIBBER, GERALDINE

Questions, oral:
 COVID-19 vaccination requirement rollout, 1182
 Economic development fund, 1122
 Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport reopening of international travel, 839, 1122
 Individualized education plans, 462

VAN BIBBER, GERALDINE *(continued)*

Questions, oral:

Mayo drinking water reservoir,	1059
Ross River School,	1152
School zone safety,	920
Student behavioural issues at Jack Hulland Elementary School,	723
Whitehorse Emergency Shelter,	751

Speaks on:

Ministerial statements:

Battery energy storage system project,	1021
Creative and cultural industries strategy,	1148
Great Yukon Summer Freeze program,	549
Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative,	398

VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF

Adel, Ted (Silver),	311
Allen, Cindy (McLean),	311
Alton, Heather (Clarke, N.),	691
Andre, Shane (Clarke, N.),	719
Asquith, Ben (Mostyn),	483
Aubrey, Bryce (Pillai),	421
Austring, Lorne (Silver),	361
Bader, Kristy (White),	941
Bailey, Devin (Mostyn),	483
Banks, Paula (Pillai),	311
Barr, Emma (Pillai),	1115
Beal, Lyndsey (Clarke, N.),	1083
Bibeau, Luke (Mostyn),	483
Blais, Jean-Sébastien (Streicker),	803
Bogaard, Jack (Pillai),	453
Bols, Andrea (Mostyn),	515
Botting, Tharian (McPhee),	325
Boueitch, Nelly (Clarke, N.),	719
Bourcier, André (Streicker),	803
Boutilier, Kevin (Clarke, N.),	1083
Brais, Melanie (Dixon),	1019
Brekke, Dave (Streicker),	777

VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF *(continued)*

Brown, Lesley (McLean),	691
Burke, Mike	
(Pillai),	941
(Streicker),	991
Burns, Damien (Mostyn),	483
Burns, Mark (Clarke, N.),	1083
Burrell, Heather (Streicker),	991
Burrows, Kirsten (Clarke, N.),	719
Buss, Cyprian (Pillai),	453
Cable, Bryna (Silver/Clarke, N.),	361
Cable, Faye (Silver),	361
Cameron, Mary (Pillai),	311
Carruthers, Karly (Silver),	311
Carruthers, Kristine (Pillai),	311
Carvill, Howard (McPhee),	395
Casanova, Jerome (Pillai),	691
Casselman, Aaron (Silver),	311
Cattet, Marc (Clarke, N.),	691
Charbonneau, Nicole (Mostyn),	483
Chislett, Tori (Streicker),	991
Clarke, Matt (Clarke, N.),	691
Cleghorn, Christine (Clarke, N.),	361, 691, 803
Craig, Kristina (Pillai/White),	453
Curlew, Frank (Pillai),	913
Dagg, Jennifer (Mostyn),	395
Davies, Rose (Silver),	829
De La Rosa, Mara (Clarke, N.),	361
Devigne, Dominic (McLean),	747
Dewdney, Kelly (Clarke, N.),	1083
Dieckmann, Kurt (Mostyn),	361
Dixon, Bonnie (Dixon),	941
Dumaine, Maryne (McLean),	311
Duncan, Pat (Silver),	361
Eby, Kelly (Silver),	361
Eby, Laura (Silver),	361
Eddy, Lisa (Pillai),	421

VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF *(continued)*

Edelman, Spencer (Silver), 361

Edelman, Sue (Silver), 361

Edelman, Tristan (Silver), 361

Eden, Jessica (Mostyn), 635

Eden, Richard (Mostyn), 635

Eftoda, Roreigh (Mostyn), 515

Eikland, Greg (Clarke, N.), 1083

Fair, Linda (Mostyn), 515

Florkiewicz, Rob (Clarke, N.), 691

Gardiner, Patrick (Streicker), 483

Gerrior, Chris (Mostyn), 547

Gerry, Quarton (McLean), 747

Grabowski, Terry (White), 830

Greening, Suzanne (Pillai), 453

Grégoire, Philippe (Streicker), 803

Grossinger, Red

 (Istchenko), 635

 (McLean), 777

 (Silver), 829

Guatto, Susan (Pillai), 421, 691

Gunter, Diane (Clarke, N.), 361

Hartling, Lars (Pillai), 691

Ho, Kim (Pillai), 311

Hoeschele, Bernie (Pillai), 421, 691

Holloway, Josephine (McLean), 777

Horne, Rob (Streicker), 483

Hrebien, Rachel (McPhee), 859

Isabelle, Jocelyne (Streicker), 803

Jacobs, Tracey (Silver), 311

Jai, Julie (Pillai), 965

Janssens, Amanda (Clarke, N.), 361

Jim, Ian (Clarke, N.), 1083

Johnson, David (Mostyn), 483

Johnson, Tammy (Streicker), 991

Johnstone, Lorelee (Streicker), 991

Jones, Catherine (Mostyn), 361

VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF *(continued)*

Jones, Heather (White),	1145
Jung, Thomas (Clarke, N.),	691
Kent, Eli Aviugana (Kent),	1053
King, Annette (Speaker Harper),	941
Kinnear, Lacia (McLean),	691
Koe, Fred (Mostyn),	483
Kroening, Carole (Tredger),	311
Labonte, Amy (White),	370
Labonte, Seamus (White),	370
Laing, Christina (McPhee),	991
Laking, Colleen (Hassard),	1177
Laking, James Bobby (Hassard),	1177
Laking, Ted (Hassard),	1177
Lang, Laura (Pillai),	311
Larbalestrier, Leslie (Streicker),	803
Latoski, Jesse (Mostyn),	483
Laxton, Dave (Istchenko),	635
Layzell, Judy (Silver),	361
Lee, Megan (McPhee),	395
Leslie, Amanda (Kent),	1053
Levins, Ulrike (Pillai),	453
Lewis, Anne	
(Pillai),	941
(Streicker),	991
Lewis, Randy (Pillai),	941
Lieverse, Amanda (Clarke, N.),	719
Lindsay, Alison (Mostyn),	515
Lindsey, Dan (Clarke, N.),	691
Lux, Franziska (Mostyn),	483
MacDonald, Amanda (Clarke, N.),	719
Malfair, Jan (Streicker),	483
Maltais, Quin (McPhee),	395
Marceau, Sacha (Silver),	311
Marshall, Vern (Mostyn),	483
Mason, Aja (McLean),	311
Mason, Rob (Clarke, N.),	719

VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF *(continued)*

Maunder, Eleanor (White),	941
Maunder, Shelby (White),	941
McDonald, Hanna (Pillai),	311
McDowell, Colin (Pillai),	311
McEachran, Cory (Clarke, N.),	719
McIntosh, Staci	
(McLean),	311
(Mostyn),	312
McKee, Chris (McPhee),	325
McLean, Bruce (Clarke, N.),	691
McLean, Rick (McLean),	311, 777
McLeish, Sean (Clarke, N.),	1083
McRae, Lorraine (McLean),	747
Mead-Robbins, Trevor (Pillai),	691
Melnychuk, Eileen (McLean),	311
Mewett, Joe	
(Istchenko),	635
(McLean),	777
(Silver),	829
Minet, Chantai (Speaker Harper),	941
Mitchell, Arthur (Silver),	311
Molet, Philippe (Pillai),	311
Moore, Paul (Streicker),	483
Moreau, Manon	
(Clarke, N.),	361
(Streicker/Clarke N.),	803
Muckenheim, Stephanie (Clarke, N.),	691
Munroe, Fiona (Mostyn),	515
Murray, Sarah (Pillai),	311
Nash, Jill (McPhee),	859
Newby, Greg (Clarke, N.),	1083
Nixon, Allan (Streicker),	991
Novak, Joseph (Silver),	829
O'Carroll, Nick (Mostyn),	547
Ogilvy, Jan (Pillai),	1115
Olsen, Riley (McLean),	747

VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF *(continued)*

O'Mara, Lee (Clarke, N.),	1083
Paradis, Marney (McPhee),	859
Parker, Al (Silver),	829
Parry, Laurel (Pillai),	1115
Patch, Sunny (Mostyn),	312
Pemberton, Mike (Silver),	311
Perry, Bert (McPhee),	395
Pier, Marie (Pillai),	965
Pike, Mark (Mostyn),	361
Pike, Val (McPhee),	325
Pilatzk-Vanier, Brenda (Mostyn),	635
Power, Nancy (Streicker),	803
Putnam, Ken (Silver),	829
Qaqqaq, Mumilaaq (White),	777
Qaqqaq, Pia (White),	777
Randhawa, Jasmina (Silver),	311
Ray, Joel (Streicker),	991
Rector, Andy (McLean),	777
Riemer, Corey (Mostyn),	483
Rivard, Laurence (McLean),	311
Robinson, Marcel (Pillai),	311
Robulack, Andrew (Mostyn),	395
Rogers, Dave (Clarke, N.),	1083
Rosel, Raquel (McLean),	311
Ross, Elena (McLean),	311
Rouble, Patrick (Clarke, Y./McLean),	747
Rudolph, Brooke (Streicker),	991
Sahid, Ziad (Pillai),	859
Salesse, Isabelle (Streicker),	803
Samson, Andrei (Pillai),	421, 691
Sanchez-Aguirre, Carlos (Clarke, N.),	719
Schamber, Ken (Streicker),	483
Schlosser, David (Mostyn),	515
Seaboyer, Keith (Mostyn),	515
Seaton, Jason (Pillai),	421
Sernoskie, Adam (White),	515

VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF *(continued)*

Sernoskie, Lennox (White),	515
Settle, Morgan (Streicker),	483
Seward, Emma (Clarke, N.),	719
Singh, Aneesha (Pillai),	311
Smith, Fred (Silver),	361
Smith, Jennifer (Clarke, N.),	691
Smith, Liz (Streicker),	991
Southwick, Glenna (Streicker),	991
Sparks, Cayley (Mostyn),	483
Sparks, Mike (Mostyn),	483
Sparks, Tristan (Mostyn),	483
Stahl, Darren (Pillai),	311
Staples, Lindsay (Clarke, N.),	691
Stavert, Kim (Pillai),	312
Stephens, Karin (McPhee),	325
Stewart, Samantha (McPhee),	395
Stewart, Sharon (Pillai),	453
Tasane, Tiffanie (McPhee),	325
Theriau, Greg (McLean),	777
Thick, Deanna (McPhee),	991
Thomas, Chad (Mostyn),	483
Thompson, Jocelyn (Mostyn),	483
Tisiga, Joseph (Pillai),	965
Tomlin, Sarah (McLean),	747
Topps, Damian (Pillai),	421
Torres, Gregory (Streicker),	803
Trick, David (Pillai),	965
Trottier, Laurie (Streicker),	803
Turpin, Rebecca (Clarke, N.),	719
Van Marck, Jacquie (Clarke, N.),	719
van Randen, Ed (Clarke, N.),	719
Vanier, Reed (Mostyn),	635
Veale, Ron (Silver),	361
Verma, Aparna (Pillai),	421
Vogt, Nina (Clarke, N.),	719
Walker, Eric (Streicker),	991

VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF *(continued)*

Warner, Arianna (Silver),	361
Warner, Brianne (Pillai),	941
Warren, Mike (Clarke, N.),	1083
Wilson, Jacob (Mostyn),	312
Wilson, Kaitlin (Clarke, N.),	691
Wojtowicz, Peter (Cathers),	1019
Woodstock, Katie (Clarke, N.),	719
Wren, Debbie (McPhee),	395
Young, Kristin (Pillai),	312
Yu Schott, Melissa (Mostyn),	515
Yuill, Morgan (Dixon),	1019
Zwikirsch, Peter	
(McLean),	777
(Silver),	829

WHITE, KATE

Questions, oral:

Affordable housing,	553
Building renovation program,	668, 1090
Chief medical officer of health authority,	606
COVID-19 rapid testing,	866
COVID-19 school protocols,	784
COVID-19 vaccine and safety measures,	725
Faro community support services,	918
Health care services,	837
Mining project oversight,	522, 1060
Opioid crisis,	971, 1153
Wildland firefighters workers' compensation coverage,	996
School staff shortage,	460
Sexual abuse within elementary school,	321, 332, 401, 429

Speaks on:

Bill No. 3: <i>Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act</i> (2021): Second Reading,	1161
Bill No. 5 - <i>Act to Amend the Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act (2021)</i> : Second Reading, ...	405
Bill No. 5: <i>Act to Amend the Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act (2021)</i> : Third Reading,	870

WHITE, KATE (*continued*)

Speaks on:

Bill No. 6: <i>Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021):</i>	
Second Reading,	435
Bill No. 7: <i>Act to Amend the Family Property and Support Act (2021):</i> Third Reading, ...	1064
Bill No. 8: <i>Workers' Safety and Compensation Act: Second Reading,</i>	557
Bill No. 202: <i>Second Appropriation Act 2021-22: Second Reading,</i>	345
Ministerial statements:	
Clean energy legislation,	695
COVID-19 vaccination requirements,	834
COVID-19 vaccination verification,	1086
COVID-19 vaccine and safety measures,	425
Draft Dawson regional land use plan,	781
Emergency medical services,	487
Flooding in Yukon,	329
Quill Creek timber harvest plan,	1058
Robert Service School,	885
State of emergency in Yukon,	807
Youth Panel on Climate Change,	457
Yukon Days,	1180
Yukon Forum,	665
Motion No. 84 - Re participation in sittings via teleconference,	334
Motion No. 112 - Re coverage for the cystic fibrosis drug Trikafta,	374
Motion No. 113 - Re amendment to Standing Order 76,	384
Motion No. 167 - Re extending the Special Committee on Electoral Reform's	
reporting deadline,	560
Motion No. 169 - Re resignation of Deputy Premier from Cabinet,	614
Motion No. 200 - Re Naloxone nasal spray,	840, 849
Motion No. 236 - Re non-confidence in Government,	1045
Motion No. 239 - Re establishing a publicly funded community walk-in clinic,	1047

WITNESSES BEFORE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Office of the Yukon Chief Medical Officer of Health

André Corriveau, Acting Chief Medical Officer of Health,	1099–1112
Jesse Kancir, Medical Officer of Health,	1099–1112

WITNESSES BEFORE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE *(continued)*

Yukon Development Corporation
 Justin Ferbey, President and Chief Executive Officer, 530–545

Yukon Energy Corporation
 Andrew Hall, President and Chief Executive Officer, 530–545

Yukon Hospital Corporation
 Al Lucier, Chair of Board of Trustees, 898–912
 Jason Bilsky, Chief Executive Officer, 898–912

Yukon University
 Lesley Brown, President and Vice-Chancellor, 1005–1017
 David Morrison, Chair of Board of Governors, 1005–1017

Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
 Mark Pike, Chair, 1069–1081
 Kurt Dieckmann, President and Chief Executive Officer, 1069–1081

APPENDIX A

(Bill No. 202 - *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*)

General Debate, 442–451, 464–482, 501–514, 584–593

Detailed breakdown of vote discussions

 Community Services, 643–660, 787–799

 Education, 936–938, 951–963, 974–988, 1169–1174, 1188–1197

 Energy, Mines and Resources, 593–602, 728–744, 852–853

 Health and Social Services, 891–898, 1093–1098, 1126–1144

 Highways and Public Works, 800–802, 816–828, 853–856, 871–881, 933–936

 Tourism and Culture, 673–689, 850–851

 Women and Gender Equity Directorate, 925–933

 Yukon Development Corporation, 706–717, 851–852

 Yukon Housing Corporation, 757–776, 815



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 27

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, November 4, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier Government House Leader Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
Hon. Nils Clarke	Riverdale North	Minister of Highways and Public Works; Environment
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Minister of Economic Development; Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Jeanie McLean	Mountainview	Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

Currie Dixon	Leader of the Official Opposition Copperbelt North	Scott Kent	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Yvonne Clarke	Porter Creek Centre	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Emily Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Annie Blake	Vuntut Gwitchin

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, November 4, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.
 We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will now proceed with the Order Paper.
 Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Clarke: I have the pleasure of introducing Dr. Patrick Rouble in the gallery today for National Skilled Trade and Technology Week. Dr. Rouble is here joining us today in his capacity as president of the board for SkillsCompétences Canada.

Dr. Rouble is a former MLA for the beautiful Southern Lakes and Cabinet minister. Thank you for coming today, and let us give Dr. Rouble a round of applause.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would also like to welcome, for the tribute that we are doing for National Skilled Trade and Technology Week: Sarah Tomlin, executive director for Skills Canada Yukon; Gerry Quarton, president of Skills Canada Yukon; and, yes, I want to also welcome Dr. Patrick Rouble — thank you very much for coming; Dominic Devigne, Skills Canada Yukon national alumni, director, and volunteer — thank you for coming; Lorraine McRae, director and volunteer; and Riley Olsen, Skills Canada Yukon program coordinator. Thank you so much for coming today.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I rise today during Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week to talk about the dangers of this poisonous gas and what Yukoners can do to protect themselves and their families. Carbon monoxide is known as a silent killer because it's a gas that you can't see, smell, or taste. It is produced when we burn fuels such as gas, kerosene, oil, propane, and wood. As temperatures drop and we head into the winter, and we're turning on our heaters and starting to use our woodstoves regularly, it's more important than ever that we know how to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe.

Installation and maintenance of fuel-burning appliances should only be done by a qualified technician who is trained to spot potential issues that could be causing carbon monoxide buildup. A qualified technician will ensure that there is enough fresh air coming into the room containing your fuel-burning appliance and that your system is effectively venting the gas outside. Every fuel-burning heating appliance has the potential

to generate dangerous levels of carbon monoxide without any obvious signs of failure. You may have no idea that something is wrong until it's too late. That's why annual maintenance is critical. Add this to your fall to-do list; it could save your life.

The next defence is to make sure that you have working carbon monoxide detectors. In 2013, the Yukon was the first jurisdiction in Canada to mandate that all residences with fuel-burning appliances or attached garages have carbon monoxide alarms. A carbon monoxide detector looks like a smoke alarm and is easy to install and maintain. Just follow the manufacturer's instructions. Carbon monoxide alarms or combination smoke alarms must be installed outside all sleeping areas on every level of your home, including the basement. If you are a tenant, it is your landlord's responsibility to install them. Make sure that you test your detectors once a month, change the batteries annually, and replace your detector when required.

Mr. Speaker, it's also important to know the warning signs and recognize the symptoms of carbon monoxide exposure. These symptoms include: headaches, nausea, dizziness, breathlessness, confusion, hallucinations, and unconsciousness. If you ever feel like this might be happening to you, get outside and call 911.

Carbon monoxide safety and prevention is a priority, not only during this week, but all year-round. During this week, we encourage you to test your alarms and to do so once a month, change the batteries every year, and practise your escape plan with your family. Just a few minutes of time and attention could save lives. You can find more information about carbon monoxide safety online at yukon.ca and on Protective Services' Facebook page.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party and the NDP caucuses to recognize November 1 to 7 as Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week. Carbon monoxide is an invisible gas. It is odourless, tasteless, and can poison the body quickly or over long periods of time, depending on concentration, ventilation, and other factors. The gas can be produced by appliances such as furnaces, stoves, water heaters, generators, and many other sources.

Carbon monoxide alarms will sound when the gas is detected. This is the only warning that you will have if there is a leak in your home. Appliances should be inspected yearly to ensure that there is no buildup of gas or leaks.

It is cold and flu season and, coupled with COVID-19, people are monitoring closely for symptoms. What many don't know is that the symptoms of exposure to carbon monoxide are similar in nature to the flu. Headaches, nausea, breathlessness, and dizziness are all things to watch for. Loss of consciousness can happen quickly, whether you are asleep or awake, which is why alarms are so important to have in your home. Have peace of mind in knowing that your symptoms are not due to carbon monoxide. Ensure that there is an alarm at least on every level of your home, and test them regularly.

Our communities have experienced loss from carbon monoxide. We know how much it hurts to lose community

members, loved ones, friends, students, and peers. It is incredibly hard for such a tight-knit territory to lose people, knowing that their loss was preventable. I urge everyone to take the time to have your furnaces and other gas appliances checked by a certified technician. Check your chimneys and vents for ice buildup in the winter and make sure that you have working carbon monoxide detectors in your homes.

Applause

In recognition of National Skilled Trade and Technology Week

Hon. Ms. McLean: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute and recognition to National Skilled Trade and Technology Week.

National Skilled Trade and Technology Week runs from October 31 to November 6 this year. It is a time to promote and raise awareness of the many career opportunities in skilled trades and technologies in Canada. Skilled trades continue to be a crucial pillar in the continued success of the Canadian economy. We do not recognize these professions as often as we should, as Yukoners who are in these positions are the ones who maintain and enable our communities to move forward.

Very few young Canadians realize just how diverse the trades are, with a preconceived notion that trades are limited to carpentry, electrical and plumbing. National Skilled Trade and Technology Week and Skills Canada are working toward debunking that notion by raising awareness and promoting the many professions that fall under the trades.

This year, Skills Canada hosted a virtual career exploration event that took place this week on November 2. Industry leaders, such as HGTV's Sebastian Clovis and Siobhan Detkavich from *Top Chef Canada*, spoke to youth across the country, challenging misconceptions and speaking to best practices for youth who are interested in pursuing a career in the trades.

I want to take the time to thank the many people who support Yukon students to explore careers within skilled trades and technologies. To the organizations that share information and promote open conversations about trades and technology, thank you. Thank you to Yukon University, which is offering accessible opportunities and introductions to the trades. Thank you to Yukon Women in Trades and Technology for providing our youth with hands-on experience, mentorship, and strong encouragement every step of the way. I cannot forget about our Department of Education's apprenticeship and trades certification staff. Your efforts are recognized and very much appreciated.

Finally, I wish to congratulate the 44 Yukon apprenticeship graduates who received their certificates this year. I wish you all success in your new careers. Let's all remember to thank our local tradespeople within our communities for making our lives better through their hard work, creativity, innovation, and passion. From all of us on this side of the House, thank you very much.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize October 31 to November 6 as National Skilled Trade and Technology Week. The theme this year is "Creativity and Innovation".

We pay tribute to the contributions made by those working in the trades and technology sectors. This week showcases the many opportunities available to youth in these important career paths. To celebrate, Skills Canada Yukon is hosting a number of events to give youth access to explore the trades by offering hands-on learning opportunities and also by offering engaging workshops and clubs to pique the interest in trades and technology.

SkillsCompétences Canada reports that over 700,000 skilled workers will be retiring by the year 2029. This will create a shortage of skilled workers in jobs that may not be filled due to the lack of students gaining trades and technology experience. This year, the stress is on the incredible importance of building a strong workforce and highlighting the benefits of pursuing the path from training, apprenticeship, and working toward a red seal.

There are 56 red seal trades in Canada: automotive; aircraft mechanics; appliance service technicians; construction trades, such as electrical, plumbing, and carpentry; culinary skills; and the list goes on. Add in all the directions that a career could take in the technology sector, and I would say that our youth have a varied and wide selection and a lot of opportunity to find something that they would love to do as a career.

We would like to recognize and thank Skills Canada Yukon and Yukon Women in Trades and Technology for the work that each organization does to promote opportunities in the Yukon. They provide awareness, information, hands-on training, and support to many. Programming opportunities, workshops, and events are held throughout the year and offer many introductions and openings to explore career options.

Thank you to everyone who worked to support and highlight the trades and technology sectors, and thanks to those who have chosen to make the trades a career and who encourage and pass on their skills to the next generation of skilled tradespeople.

Applause

Ms. White: On behalf of the Yukon NDP and as a ticketed tradesperson, I stand in celebration of this year's National Skilled Trade and Technology Week. The world as we know it wouldn't exist without folks in the trades and technology fields. The pandemic has taught us all just how important a career in a skilled trade or the technology sector really is, and this year's theme brings that idea home while focusing on creativity and innovation. The Yukon has made leaps and bounds in the arena of skilled trades and technology since I was young. Organizations like SkillsCompétences Canada Yukon and Yukon Women in Trades and Technology have sprouted, grown, and expanded, and through their outreach and hands-on approach, they are opening doors for Yukon youth toward exciting careers.

Skills Canada Yukon provides youth with hands-on opportunities by offering fun and engaging workshops and

skills clubs in trades and technology areas. Some events that they are facilitating this week are taking place across the Yukon: a virtual animation contest, the construction of bird houses with students at Jack Hulland Elementary School, a cooking workshop in partnership with Iron Women, and travelling to Mayo to deliver an animation with a Skills Canada Yukon alumnus.

Mr. Speaker, in Canada's future economy, the skilled trades and technology sectors are going to matter more than ever, and it is a good thing that in Yukon, with the hands-on mentorship of SkillsCompétences Yukon and Yukon Women in Trades and Technology, we are well on our way to that future.

Applause

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: The Chair has for tabling the 2020-21 annual report of the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate office.

Are there any other returns or documents for tabling?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I have for tabling a letter to the Member for Watson Lake. Yesterday, the Member for Watson Lake made reference to a letter that she had written on July 21 and had suggested that I had ignored it for 105 days. I did respond in August, and I am tabling that letter today.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: When tabling documents, the member can give dates and a brief description.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have for tabling the reply and further notice of re-sending this letter to the member today.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Cathers: I rise today to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Health and Social Services to explain why her government is providing Yukon Hospital Corporation with just \$85.76 million in funding this year, according to her own statement during Question Period on November 2, when the actual hospital expenses for last fiscal year were \$103.6 million, according to the Yukon Hospital Corporation annual report that the minister tabled in the Assembly.

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education to work with the Jack Hulland school community to host a public meeting before the end of November in order to discuss

solutions for the increased acts of violence, bullying, and vandalism that are happening at the school.

Ms. Blake: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to expand the scope of children's disability services to include equal financial support for parents and/or guardians who are full-time caregivers to a child or children with a disability.

Ms. White: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to listen to health care and addictions experts by urgently implementing a managed alcohol program in the Yukon.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide local, consistent, and long-term mental health services accessible and available to all residents of Faro.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to communicate the details of the COVID-19 vaccine mandate to Yukon non-governmental organizations by November 10, 2021.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to communicate the details of the COVID-19 vaccine mandate to Yukon businesses by November 10, 2021.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in youth centre

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Last week, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation held an opening ceremony for their new youth centre, or young people house. The 3,000-square-foot building was designed specifically to meet the needs of youth in Dawson City. It includes a movie room, a space for workshops and meetings, and a full kitchen to support the Jordan's Principle food program.

The new centre will give local youth and young adults in Dawson the tools, space, and programming that will help them pursue traditional activities, education, and opportunities for development. We are proud to support facilities and well-rounded programming like this that help Yukoners live healthy, culturally fulfilling lives.

As most members of this House will recall, this project was highlighted in the Premier's Budget Address earlier this year.

Mr. Speaker, facilities like this are so important to the growth, health, and well-being of our communities. Dawson City has many venues for adults to socialize, but options are limited for younger residents. The new Dawson youth centre is providing a safe and healthy space for the youth of the town.

Design and construction of the new youth centre was funded through a partnership between the Yukon government, the Government of Canada, and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in

through the Investing in Canada infrastructure program. We have provided nearly \$500,000 for this project. While government funding was critical to ensure that the facility was built, the capital funding did not cover the cost of all the materials and supplies needed to bring the new youth centre to life. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation stepped up to fill the gaps by engaging the community and raising funds to help turn this building into a welcoming centre for the community's youth.

I would also like to acknowledge the work and commitment of the leaders and staff of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation government. Investing in our youth is one of the most important and smart decisions that leaders can make. This is just one of the many investments that the Yukon government is making in community infrastructure that helps to build a stronger foundation for our communities.

Again, I would like to congratulate the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation on the completion of the new youth centre and to thank them for working in partnership to support youth in their community.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity to reply to this ministerial statement.

I think we can all agree that giving youth the proper tools for success will ensure a better future for everyone. That's why the Official Opposition is pleased to hear that the new Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in youth centre opened for Dawson youth.

I understand that the building itself was designed specifically for Dawson area youth and contains a full kitchen to house a Jordan's Principle food program. I am happy that the centre will have such a food program, as no child deserves to go hungry.

I would also like to thank the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and the Dawson community for stepping up and ensuring that the new centre was outfitted properly for youth. Our congratulations to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, the Dawson area community, and all who were involved in making this youth centre a reality.

I hope that with this successful project, the government will work with additional Yukoners about what they would like to see in their communities. Perhaps the minister could update us on other Yukon First Nations and communities that the government has approached about building youth centres.

Ms. Blake: The Yukon NDP are excited to hear about the new youth space for young people in Dawson. This space came to life because of the leadership and hard work of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation. Time and time again, it is Yukon First Nations that lead the way in prioritizing and uplifting youth. For generations, we have known that issues upstream affect our entire lives. It's why we are so focused on our youth. It is only very recently that political leaders have listened. I am so glad to see that this investment was made.

Young Yukoners today face many challenges that may have been foreign to us when we were in our youth. This space is a huge success for Dawson City; it is a space by and for

youth. They can be among peers and support workers whom they trust in a space that they feel ownership in.

I've always believed in ensuring the safety and well-being of our youth in the territory as they are our future leaders. For youth in rural communities, safe spaces like this create a sense of belonging and purpose. The Young People House is an example of the power of public space.

While the minister stated that Dawson has lots of social venues for adults, he forgot to mention that most of these social spaces also cost money. Bars, restaurants, the casino, and stores all require payment to spend time in. To access a social space, you usually need cash to enter and stay. Having a free community space with things to do and peers to spend time with is invaluable. I hope that more spaces like this continue to open up.

When we devote land and buildings to public space over private developers, it protects the community. It helps everyone. Efforts should be placed in other rural communities to develop youth spaces like this. The Young People House will benefit the entire community of Dawson.

Congratulations to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and their youth for their hard work and the opening of their well-deserved centre.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I want to thank the members opposite who responded to this ministerial statement this afternoon in solidarity and agreement as to what a great space this is. I do agree with the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin that public spaces for the public that can be readily accessed without any cost are very important. I am glad that we are contributing to the public commons with this announcement today. I look forward to building more.

I will say to the Member for Watson Lake that the Investing in Canada infrastructure fund projects were determined by the communities themselves, so hats off to the community of Dawson City and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, who came forward with this proposal that we then submitted to the proper infrastructure funding and got the project built. This is the same process that any community in the territory can do. We welcome their suggestions.

Investing in community infrastructure that brings Yukoners together to learn, share, and grow creates stronger communities, better outcomes for families, and an opportunity to impact Yukoners for generations — to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin's point. The Young People House is a great example of how investments in shared community facilities do just that. Dawson youth now have a place where they can join their peers, create new lifelong friendships in their community, and have a positive environment that promotes learning and growth. This is the type of investment that changes the community now and impacts future generations of Dawsonites.

Our government is focused on continuing to invest in community infrastructure to build stronger communities and improve the life of Yukoners across the territory. Another example of an investment like this which is having a direct impact on a community is the upgrades to the Mayo aerodrome. In 2019, our government started working with community

partners to make extensive upgrades to the Mayo aerodrome, including rehabilitating the runway, building new maintenance equipment, and installing energy-efficient airfield lighting. This made a huge impact in the community of Mayo. With these additional upgrades, residents in Mayo and surrounding communities can now access commercial flights directly from their home. For a rural community such as Mayo, this allows residents to easily access reliable and fast travel to other parts of the Yukon, Canada, and the world. That makes a big difference in the lives of Mayo residents and those in the surrounding communities.

Our government continues to make strategic investments to build healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities. We have allocated more than \$10 million for the new health and wellness centre in Old Crow. The new centre will be the first of its kind in the Yukon, providing both health and social services with a collaborative care model.

These are just some of the examples of community projects that we are investing in that have strengthened Yukon communities and, in turn, have strengthened opportunities for Yukoners. I could name a dozen others in communities across the territory.

Every Yukoner deserves to have an opportunity to succeed, and it is through our communities that those opportunities are created. We will continue to work to make strategic investments in Yukon communities across the territory that make real impacts in the lives of Yukoners. Thank you very much for your time this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Whitehorse Emergency Shelter

Ms. Van Bibber: In December 2018, the Yukon government made the decision to take over the Centre of Hope shelter facility. The former Liberal minister told the *Yukon News* that she hoped the centre would become more than just a shelter and that it should become a place where people can gather. Since then, government has made a number of policy and physical changes to the operation. The result of all those changes have been an uptick in security and safety challenges for surrounding businesses in the area. Businesses in the area have experienced property damage and inappropriate behaviour in, or directly in front of, their businesses.

Does the current Minister of Health and Social Services recognize that changes that the former minister made to the operation of the emergency shelter have had negative impacts on businesses in the area?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I am pleased to share that we have implemented most of the recommendations from the 2020-21 community safety plan, including those related to ensuring the safety of shelter clients, drop-in guests, and staff and enhancing the shelter's strategic operational governance.

Developing this community safety plan included bringing together government and community partners identified as key service providers or groups directly impacted by the shelter's

operations. That includes local businesses, residents who live downtown, and all who are impacted by — or consider being impacted by — the shelter's operations.

We continue to explore options that support creating a safe and harmonious community for shelter clients, for the neighbouring residents, and for businesses. Our goal is to increase access to culturally appropriate and trauma-informed supports and services to increase wellness for our community members who use the shelter.

Ms. Van Bibber: We have seen the implications of the changes that the Liberal government made to the operations of the shelter start to spill over.

Just last week, a long-time Yukon coffee shop announced that it is closing. When asked about the impact of the proximity to the shelter on the decision to close, the owner told CBC this — and I quote: “The difficulty is that there are behaviours that spill out of the shelter that are completely uncontrolled and they're a block and a half away” — not even a block away — “And YG refuses to do anything about security. So, it's left to individual business owners, and it's ramped up pretty hard since the shelter went no barriers.”

Will the minister agree to review the operations of the emergency shelter and consult with businesses that have been affected by the changes in policy that have occurred since the Liberals took control of this facility?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Our government has established an agreement with the Council of Yukon First Nations to develop a program to enhance safety in the shelter's vicinity and to strengthen cultural programming within the shelter. That is a key operational plan, absolutely forward-looking, working with our partners. We continue to collaborate with community agencies and NGO partners to support a low-barrier, trauma-informed, culturally appropriate, and housing-focused shelter, assisting shelter users with their wellness and their personal goals.

Ms. Van Bibber: The Salvation Army operated the shelter in the same area for decades. While there were some issues, there was nothing like what has happened since the Liberals took over this facility in 2019. The changes that have been made by the Liberal government have directly resulted in negative impacts on surrounding businesses. Some businesses have put up security bars on their windows; others have had to construct other security measures. The shelter has been cited as a contributing factor by at least one long-time business that has decided to close its doors.

Will the minister acknowledge the impact that the decisions of a former minister have had on the surrounding businesses and agree to meet with affected businesses to consider changes in the way that the emergency shelter is operated?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think that it's worth reminding Yukoners of a couple of things that I might correct in that preamble to this question. One is that the location for the current shelter was chosen by the former government — the Yukon Party government. It was identified as an appropriate location, and it was built without any plan whatsoever to operate it.

The reference to the former Salvation Army is a shift — absolutely — by our government because, as I've said, we're looking for low-barrier, trauma-informed care and opportunities for Yukoners.

With respect to the local business that has been referenced, I too heard that interview, and it was certainly not the driving decision — or indicated as the driving decision — for that businessowner.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to collaborate with the community within the shelter and community agencies and NGO partners to support a low-barrier, trauma-informed, culturally appropriate, and housing-focused shelter, which was absolutely not the case for the previous government. We have shifted, and I am pleased that we have.

Question re: Carbon tax exemptions for home heating

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon is on the brink of an energy crisis. As the territory grows, demands on our energy are increasing. Due to poor planning by the Liberal government, there is no solution on the horizon.

The growing population of the territory is putting a huge strain on our electrical grid. There is a real potential — if one of our generation stations were to malfunction, we would be in a scenario where we do not have enough electricity to meet demand. The proposed Atlin hydro expansion is only projected to be completed in 2024, according to the Yukon Energy Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, what is the government's plan to meet our energy demands in the short term?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: If you have driven down Robert Service Way or the south access lately, you will have seen some clearing happening. Kwanlin Dün has been doing some clearing. I found out, after questions that were raised here previously, that Kwanlin Dün is getting the wood that is cleared there for elders, so that is good news.

What they are going to put there is a battery project — a grid-scale battery project. That battery project is going to allow us to shave our peaks in the mornings and in the evenings, especially in the wintertime. It will effectively replace several of our extra diesels. There's an example of work we are doing.

The member opposite noted the 10-year renewable electricity plan by Yukon Energy, which is a terrific plan. I am really happy to get up and talk about that further. So, there is work that is happening, and we are looking forward to it. It's exciting work.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, last month, the Yukon Energy Corporation told us that they plan to rent these dirty diesel generators until at least 2030. The Liberals also confirmed on November 2 that they are investing an additional \$45 million in permanent diesel generators.

My understanding is that the battery bank will only reduce those diesel generators by four. With the push to convert more homes to electric heat and with the push to convert more vehicles to electric, this means that much of the electricity for these supposedly green energy options will actually come from rented diesels.

How does the minister square this circle?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The Yukon Energy Corporation was here. The members opposite asked the direct question: What is the cost of renting diesels versus building a new diesel plant? The president of the corporation said that it's the same cost. What the difference is, Mr. Speaker, is that, if you build a new diesel plant like the opposition party would have us do, you are locked in so that we can't transition the energy economy. We on this side want to transition the energy economy to a renewable, green, sustainable future. That's what we're doing. I think it's great that the battery program is going to replace four rented diesels. That is terrific news.

Mr. Hassard: Another project that the government is claiming will solve our energy crisis is the Moon Lake pump station project. The problem is that so little is known about this project right now, Yukoners don't even know if it's realistic. In fact, on November 2 of this week, the minister admitted that he had so little detail that he doesn't even know what the general capital cost of the project is. In fact, while the Energy Corporation documents currently claim that the project will be completed in seven years, the minister started to hedge on that timeline and suggested that 10 years might be more realistic. Unfortunately, a project that may or may not come to fruition in 10 years does nothing to solve our energy needs now.

Can the minister tell us what major energy projects that are coming online in the short term will address the growing demand for electricity in the territory?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I lived through next generation hydro with the members opposite. That was something that didn't go anywhere.

What are we doing? We are building wind up on Haeckel Hill right now. We have solar going up across the territory. Old Crow has solar coming in, displacing diesel. It was energized recently. We have solar going into Dawson City. We have a project happening in Watson Lake, Beaver Creek, and Burwash. We are about to build a grid-scale battery here, which is replacing four diesel generators.

Mr. Speaker, what I want to say to Yukoners right now is that we need a future that is going to address the climate crisis and is going to shift us to renewable energy, and the members opposite want us to build a fossil-fuel diesel generation plant — no thanks.

Question re: Social assistance rates

Ms. Blake: A week ago, this House debated a motion that I tabled calling for a review of the social assistance rates. The Minister for Economic Development said — and I quote: "... I think it is timely and I think it's important ... I think we will have an opportunity to touch on all those aspects — and how key it is to be reviewing."

The minister seemed to agree that a review is needed and for good reason: 2007 was the last time that the base rates for social assistance were reviewed.

Will the Minister of Health and Social Services confirm that this government is actually committed to reviewing the social assistance rates?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin. I did appreciate the opportunity to speak to this last week, and I do believe that it is time for us, working through the *Putting People First* document, to review this. There are discrepancies in how people are supported, based on which agency is providing them funds. That has been clearly defined in *Putting People First* — I think 5.4 is the area within the document that speaks to this.

Also, I spoke to the fact that we are in a labour shortage as well, and we also need to go and meet people who are receiving assistance to see if there is any way that we can have the proper wraparound services for them — to see if there are good opportunities within our workforce. In some cases, I know that individuals have gone through, or are going through, many challenging situations and maybe are not in a position to become part of the current workforce, and they need the appropriate services to not just make sure that they have proper housing, but that they have the amenities needed to lead a proper quality of life.

Again, yes, those are the statements that I made. I think it is important work, and that is why it was identified in *Putting People First*. An independent panel identified that there is a lack of equity within that structure, and I think that everybody in this House believes that this needs to be worked on and a balanced approach needs to be taken.

Ms. Blake: Taken as a whole, income is one of the most important — if not the most important — determinant of our health. Our income affects access to housing, extended health benefits, and even food. That is directly from the *Putting People First* report.

Folks on social assistance haven't seen a review of these rates in 14 years. The gaps keep increasing as everything around us costs more. Yukoners are falling farther behind.

We only have to look at how many people are on housing wait-lists, temporarily housed in long-stay hotels, or homeless to see how far-reaching poverty is here.

Will the minister commit to a review of these rates so that Yukoners on social assistance, including seniors and families, don't have to live below the poverty line?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the opportunity to stand and speak about the social assistance rates here in the territory. I absolutely agree that it's a critical service provided to Yukoners.

As of May 2021, the monthly benefit rate for a one-person household in Whitehorse can be up to approximately almost \$1,500. A person with a disability who receives Yukon's supplementary allowance and is eligible for additional benefits could receive up to a little over \$1,800 monthly. The monthly benefit rate for a family of four with two children under the age of 14 living in Whitehorse can be up to a little over \$3,100. It's important to note that Yukon has higher benefit rates in communities outside of Whitehorse to account for the higher cost of living.

We have talked about a review, and we have, as the member opposite noted in the motion that was here, exactly committed to such a thing.

Ms. Blake: It's not just the rates that are a concern. Social assistance regulations also make little sense. Produce from someone's garden or an animal from a hunt should not be considered income. This does not respect traditional hunting and gathering practices. Removing utilities from a fixed rent in the summer months also doesn't make sense. People have to make up for the missing rent somewhere else like their food budget.

The *Putting People First* report recommends that this government — and I quote: "Conduct a program evaluation of social supports, to determine if current practices and policies are achieving program objectives..."

Does this government have a concrete plan for closing the gaps of lower income Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: There was a lot in that question, first and foremost talking about some of the discretionary decisions that are made by one agency to another. I think, from my experience in working with other programs where supports are put in place for individuals, even simple things like providing a stipend while folks are going through professional development sometimes becomes something that is clawed back.

We did not finalize a vote during the debate, but I will, for the record, say multiple times that we stated that we support that work. We think that is work that needs to be done.

When it comes to the entire set of opportunities for folks, yes, I think that when we look at how people can improve their quality of life, we do have to take a look and review. That is some of the work of *Putting People First* that we support and agree with you on.

On the second side, I think that we also have to take a look at what has happened within the territory. We are tracking, in many ways, where we have seen wage increases. I think that we are in the number two or number three over the last year in where wages have increased. We have seen a commitment here.

We are working with the Third Party around things on minimum wage and the decisions that we made on minimum wage. We have also seen that there are a tremendous number of jobs open now. The last information that I have looked at shows \$25 to \$26 per hour as an average wage with over 1,000 jobs available. We have to take all of that into consideration.

Question re: Energy supply and demand

Mr. Istchenko: As the coldest months of the year approach, many Yukoners are becoming increasingly worried about the cost of energy and heating this winter. Due to the Liberal government's inaction on forestry, there is a shortage of commercial firewood, which is driving prices up.

Propane prices are surging. According to one report, prices in Edmonton are up 296 percent, which means similar price shocks are likely to come to the Yukon. There is a similar story when it comes to home heating fuel. Natural Resources Canada shows that the price of furnace oil in Canada is around 40 percent higher than it was this time last year.

What all this means is that Yukoners are going to be paying a whole lot more to keep warm this winter, Mr. Speaker, so what is this government doing to increase affordability and reduce the cost of staying warm in the winter for Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: This question shows all of us that we need to shift the energy economy as much as possible. It's important to move there.

In terms of firewood, I want to thank the wood producers for reaching out to us this summer. They expressed a concern around access to firewood-cutting areas, so the department got a couple of smaller lots — two in Haines Junction, a couple around Fox Lake — available for woodcutters. We are now working on getting the larger block of Quill Creek, which has now made it through YESA.

I talked earlier when I rose about the battery project. The battery project is a great example of where we are investing in the ability to shave peaks, which then reduces our dependence on diesels. We all know that the price of diesel has been going up, so those are all steps we are taking to try to support Yukoners with heating in the territory.

Mr. Istchenko: As the minister alluded to, the Yukon Wood Products Association flagged this issue for the minister months ago, yet we are still seeing that a majority of our commercial firewood is coming from out of the territory — from down south. Of course, this means that prices are going up. People are even seeing the price of cordwood skyrocket to \$500 per cord. For a senior, that is troubling. We know that one factor driving up the cost of commercial firewood is the carbon tax. Some sectors, like mining, have been exempted from the carbon tax.

Will the minister commit to negotiating an exemption from the carbon tax for the commercial firewood operators to help address the rising cost of firewood here in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: When I met with the Wood Products Association and the department — the forest resources branch met with them — what we committed to do was to work diligently to try to address the shortage.

I have heard comments about firewood coming from British Columbia. Some of it is just coming from just across the border. I have asked the department to check into that for me and make sure that my information is correct. I will get back to the House.

But overall, what we are doing is working with those woodcutters to try to get them access to firewood so that we get more supply into the whole system. We hope that the increase in prices is short-lived.

I know that we have Quill Creek coming shortly. I can answer more, but the direction that I gave to the department was to do all they could to support the woodcutting industry in the short, medium, and long term.

Mr. Istchenko: What would work is if they would negotiate an exemption from the carbon tax for those operators; that is what would work. Here in the Yukon, some industries are exempt from the carbon tax; I said that earlier. The logic of these exemptions is that there is no alternative for these industries other than to use fossil fuels. There absolutely isn't. Well, we think this applies to firewood and home heating as well.

The Northwest Territories had vision. That government was able to negotiate an exemption from the carbon tax for

home heating fuel. Unfortunately, here, the Yukon was not able to negotiate as good a deal as the Northwest Territories.

Will the minister agree to work with the federal government to negotiate exemptions from the carbon tax for important sectors like the commercial firewood sector? As well, will he seek an exemption for home heating fuel, similar to what the Northwest Territories has, to help address the high cost that Yukoners are facing just to try to stay warm this winter?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: For five years, I listened to the Yukon Party as they said that carbon pricing was the wrong thing to do. They ran against it nationally and here in the territory. I think that Canadians and Yukoners now understand that carbon pricing is a good tool to try to address the climate crisis. In fact, carbon pricing is one of those things that will help to drive our markets toward things like biomass.

I would love to hear — because I understand that the members opposite —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Order, please. The member has the floor.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I understand that the members opposite said in the last election that they do support carbon pricing, so I'm interested to hear what it is that they support if today they are asking me to speak against it.

What I will say is that we will work diligently to support our woodcutters and those people who rely on firewood to make sure that we have as much access to firewood. I have had calls with chiefs to work on providing more access. I have already explained that I have directed the department to work with our producers. We worked to get some additional blocks available over the fall, and we have more coming. We will do our best to try to get access to wood for Yukoners.

Question re: Student behavioural issues at Jack Hulland Elementary School

Mr. Kent: We continue to hear concerns from the Jack Hulland school community about aggressive behaviour by some students in the school. Staff and students are increasingly anxious about what is happening on a day-to-day basis.

Yesterday we heard from a member of the school community that some students are so anxious or afraid to go to school that they have to be torn away from their parents as they arrive in the morning. There are tears in the classroom and anxiety is running high. Everyone is looking to the minister to provide leadership on this.

What options are being considered by the minister to alleviate the fears and concerns of students, staff, and parents at Jack Hulland school?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I want to first start by saying that the Department of Education supports a healthy, active, safe, and caring learning environment in our schools. This is a commitment outlined in the Safe and Caring Schools policy that we all follow, which applies to students, parents, teachers, and other school staff.

Yesterday we had quite a long discussion about Jack Hulland. I had expressed, yes, how concerned I am for the school and their well-being as the Minister of Education.

Jack Hulland school council — I am not sure if the folks across the way know that they decided to delay their regular council meeting in order to meet with school administration and senior officials of the Schools and Student Services branch to gather more information on recent incidents that have occurred in the school this week. Senior officials from the Schools and Student Services branch will continue to work with the school council and the school administration in responding to parental concerns and to seek solutions to help reduce these behaviours within the school. The school council has indicated that they will be providing another opportunity for parents to express concerns and seek responses later this month.

Mr. Kent: We know that the minister met personally with the staff in late October to discuss their concerns. Stories are coming to us of serious physical altercations between staff and students, particularly with some students who are in the Grove Street program. These included a teacher last year receiving a serious brain injury and another teacher being assaulted. Both of these educators never returned to the school.

Can the minister tell us what specific actions that will actually address safety concerns she is taking, based on feedback received from staff at the meeting she attended?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I did speak about this yesterday, extensively — about the meeting that I attended. All staff were invited to meet with me on October 21. About half of the staff did. I was able to listen, learn, acknowledge, and hear them directly regarding their concerns. There has been a confidential report from that meeting — I want to remind members opposite of that — that was provided this week to the staff at the Jack Hulland Elementary School.

I spoke yesterday about the Department of Education having a very experienced administrator, Jeff Cressman, who is principal of Elijah Smith, at the school until November 12 to provide additional support for the school administration team while the principal is on leave. There are a number of steps that are being taken by the department to work on opportunities for one-on-one conversations with staff members. Information collected in individual interviews with a private contractor — anonymously — will be analyzed to identify themes. I will continue on with my answer as we proceed.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, as the minister mentioned earlier, yesterday afternoon, the Jack Hulland school council postponed their scheduled meeting when a number of parents were quite interested in discussing these concerns. However, in response, we understand that a number of parents held a Zoom call in light of the postponement. From that, they are looking for a town hall of the school community to come up with tangible actions and solutions to present to the department. This is because, after months and months of pleading to the Liberal government to show leadership and make this school safe for children and staff, there has been nothing but inaction from this minister.

Will the minister support this work and respond to any requests for information or resources to facilitate this town hall, and will she attend the town hall if invited to do so?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I started out with today on the commitment of our government to have healthy, active, safe, and caring learning environments in our Yukon schools, I am going to go somewhere a little bit different. The Yukon Party and the leader particularly — and I point out “the leader” — continues to spread misinformation about our education system and I want to speak to Yukoners about this. It is irresponsible and absolutely disappointing. Leadership is needed to fix the school system —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Member for Lake Laberge, on a point of order.

Mr. Cathers: The Minister of Education just clearly contravened Standing Order 19(h) in reference to the statement she made about the Leader of the Official Opposition. I would ask you to remind her of that point and have her retract those comments.

Speaker: Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, the point of order that the member opposite is referring to is “charges another member with uttering a deliberate falsehood”, and clearly, the Minister of Education did not do that.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: There is no point of order. This is a dispute between members.

The Minister of Education has the floor.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, leadership is needed to fix our school system. Politicizing the challenges in our schools and stoking anger and division does a disservice to all of our students and the many dedicated staff who are working every day to support our students. We are doing the hard work to improve our schools after a decade and a half of neglect from the Yukon Party.

I have met with the Jack Hulland school council. I have met with the staff at Jack Hulland. We have made adjustments to the learning spaces to improve safety. We have reviewed all the learning plans for the students in the Grove Street program. We have updated the Grove Street handbook, and as I have stated, we will be supporting a family-parent meeting later this month.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Before the House proceeds to Orders of the Day, the Chair will rule on the question of privilege raised by the Member for Lake Laberge on Monday, November 1, 2021. The Member raised the question of privilege in response to the Minister of Community Services' Facebook posts dated

October 21, 2021. The question for the Chair to decide is whether there appears to be a prima facie, or apparent, breach of privilege.

Standing Order 7(4) states: “When the Speaker has ruled that

“(a) there appears to be a prima facie case of breach of privilege, and

“(b) the matter has been raised at the earliest opportunity

“any member may either immediately propose a motion or, not later than at the conclusion of the next sitting day, give notice of a motion calling upon the Assembly to take action thereon or referring the same to a Committee of the Assembly.”

Once such a motion is called for debate, all other business before the House, with the exception of the Daily Routine, will be set aside until debate on the motion is concluded.

As the Chair has noted, members are required to raise questions of privilege at the earliest possible moment after an alleged breach has occurred. The Member for Lake Laberge did not raise this question of privilege on the first available sitting day. However, in this case, the member has asserted that he first became aware of the Facebook posts on Friday, October 29, 2021. The Member brought the matter to the attention of the House on Monday, November 1, 2021.

The Chair will take the Member at his word that he brought it to the attention of the House at the earliest possible moment once he was made aware of it.

The first issue that the Chair considered is whether the language used in the Facebook posts from October 21, 2021 in fact constitutes either a prima facie breach of privilege or a prima facie contempt of the House. To assist in the Chair’s deliberations on this, it was necessary to understand the context in which the post was made. On October 14, 2021, the Government of Yukon issued a news release, No. 21-401, on the Yukon.ca website. In this release, as is common in government news releases following the first reading of government bills, there is an explanation of what the legislation would do if the bill is passed.

The Chair considered the language of the actual Facebook posts in question. In these posts, the Minister of Community Services makes various statements, all using the future tense. The Facebook post released on October 21 at 11:04 a.m. includes that the better building program “... will allow Yukoners to renovate their homes to make them more energy efficient” and “Yukoners will be able to access up to \$50,000 to make green retrofits”. The text on the image that accompanies the post says, “The Better Building Program would provide Yukoners with up to \$50,000 for home energy efficient retrofits...”

Later, on October 21, 2021, at 4:23 p.m., the Minister of Community Services released another Facebook post. In this post, the minister states the benefits of what the better building program will do for Yukon businesses: “The Better Building Program supports the goals in the Our Clean Future Strategy and will help Yukon businesses retrofit their buildings to make them more energy efficient”. It also says, “Yukon businesses will be able to access up to \$100,000 to make energy retrofits to their buildings”. The image included with the post says, “The

Better Building Program would provide Yukon businesses with up to \$100,000”.

The Chair believes that this language is consistent with what governments and individual Members of the Legislative Assembly have previously released discussing future programs being contemplated in one form or another by the Legislative Assembly.

The second issue is whether the posts are contrary to previous rulings by previous Speakers of this House. As noted by the Member for Lake Laberge, there are limits to how a government may present what programs will do or would do.

In a ruling regarding pre-budget announcements, Speaker Staffen stated on April 7, 2005: “... not all government news releases acknowledged that such spending was subject to the approval of the Legislature. The Chair believes this statement should be included in all such statements to ensure that the Assembly’s authority is respected, its dignity is protected and the public is properly informed.”

The Minister of Community Services’ Facebook posts on October 21, 2021 did not indicate that the better building program was contingent on bills being passed by the Assembly, as would be the best practice for such messaging. The minister did, however, use the future tense rather than the present tense so as not to confuse the public that the program is already operational.

Unlike the case of the 2018 ruling by House of Commons Speaker Geoff Regan cited by the Member for Lake Laberge, the reader of the October 21 Facebook posts is not left with the idea that the legislation is already in effect but instead is left questioning the timing of when the program will be in place.

Finally, the Member for Lake Laberge referenced a March 7, 2019 ruling by the previous Speaker of the Yukon Legislative Assembly. The Chair does not believe this ruling is wholly applicable. In that case, a government press release presupposed that the Legislative Assembly would pass certain bills prior to the bills actually having received third reading. Those assertions were presumptuous and also confusing. In his ruling, the previous Speaker noted that what had occurred was an error based on a misunderstanding of the legislative process.

There are no assertions that a bill will pass the House in the Facebook posts made by the Minister of Community Services. There is a description of what a program will do in the future, and while it does not indicate what needs to happen before the program can begin, the description is definitely in the future tense.

The Chair will take this opportunity to urge members to use precise language in all their communications with the public. In the age of many different kinds of media where space is limited, it may be convenient to leave out that programs are not yet in place and require legislative approval. It is, however, the best practice and the clearest for the public for members to ensure in these communications that there is no confusion and that the authority of the Assembly is neither called into question nor is the impression given that the Legislative Assembly plays a perfunctory role.

The Chair finds that there is neither a prima facie contempt nor a prima facie breach of privilege in respect of the question

of privilege raised by the Member for Lake Laberge. I thank the Member for Laberge for his submission on this matter.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Acting Government House Leader that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. Blake): Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 202: *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — continued

Chair: Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Yukon Housing Corporation

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Madam Chair, as Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, I am pleased to rise this afternoon to outline the spending requested as part of the first supplementary estimates for 2021-22.

I would like to take this opportunity to show my appreciation and thank the staff and the board of directors of the Yukon Housing Corporation for their hard work and dedication to making more affordable housing options available to Yukoners and continuing to deliver innovative housing solutions.

Before I begin my address, I would like to acknowledge the officials who will assist me today: Mary Cameron is with us, the president of the Yukon Housing Corporation; and Marcel Holder-Robinson, director of finance and risk management at the Yukon Housing Corporation. Madam Chair, I can't stress enough how appreciative I am about working with

the senior leadership team that I get to work with daily and weekly at the Yukon Housing Corporation. We have put a tremendous amount of work on their plates. At every turn, they have stood up to take that on, understanding the situation that we are in here in the Yukon, and their passion toward delivering on what we need here, based on some very tough markets. I want to thank them. Over the last number of months, I've been getting to know folks and they are helping me as we take a really aggressive approach to dealing with housing.

Our supplementary estimates provide the Yukon Housing Corporation with an opportunity to update the main estimates that we provided in the spring. There is no other way to say it: This year has been, again, a tough year for the Yukon and the housing sector is no exception. We saw lumber prices soar to unprecedented levels. We saw the construction sector busier than ever with the competition for the labour force. We saw individuals and families struggle with unprecedented housing instability, as both the workforce and their employment shifted.

As well, we saw landlords struggling with market instability and the movement of selling off their rental stock, resulting in rentals turning into home-ownership sales and an increase to rental rates as new owners took on new debt and risk.

On all fronts, we know that we have more to do as we work with our housing partners on stabilizing the affordable housing market. Although the housing landscape continues to change, we remain committed to fiscal responsibility and we continue to adapt, mobilize, and find solutions to these fluctuations.

Thus, Madam Chair, the supplementary estimates that I'm presenting today for the Yukon Housing Corporation are focused on the core needs of Yukoners.

Like many jurisdictions across Canada, the Yukon is experiencing a high demand for housing. We face significant challenges in terms of availability, quality, and affordability of housing. In addition, we are seeing increased demand for Yukon Housing Corporation's community housing stock which continues to exceed the supply of our units; our wait-list continues to grow.

There are a number of reasons for the growth in wait-list numbers: one, our shortage of robust housing options, along with the high cost of rental housing and home ownership; in some communities, limited private rental housing; growing population in the Yukon, including within our seniors demographic; increased economic uncertainty for some individuals and families due to the COVID-19 pandemic; and barriers to housing such as affordability and discrimination as reported in the point-in-time count conducted in April 2021.

To respond to these challenges, over the past three years, the corporation has been successfully working toward its five-year strategic plan vision to deliver housing solutions that contribute to healthy, sustainable, and inclusive communities. We remain committed to supporting housing options for Yukoners. Our housing programs have now supported the construction of over 600 homes in the territory. Our funding program successfully leveraged partnerships in support of the development of new affordable housing projects and programs. If we are going to be successful in resolving these housing

issues, it will take all partners in the housing field to work together.

We are guided by three goals of the Yukon Housing Corporation strategic plan: We are a trusted housing partner, we are renewing and rebalancing community housing, and we are strengthening our corporate stewardship.

In addition to the corporation's strategic plan, we are working on the goals and objectives of the housing action plan for Yukon, the Safe at Home plan to end and prevent homelessness, and the aging-in-place action plan and the recommendations from the *Putting People First* report.

As part of this work, we recently organized a housing summit to bring together key housing stakeholders to discuss the next big ideas in housing, to facilitate conversations, and to together take action to ensure that more housing options are available in the future. The summit saw participation across all orders of government, First Nation development corporations, municipalities, non-profit organizations, and the private sector. Participants provided housing options to address and meet those critical needs.

Our collaborative approach resulted in innovative partnerships and solutions to grow housing stock, address the affordability gap, and support the development of a full housing continuum across the Yukon. While we look forward to achieving housing affordability solutions that were established during the housing summit and celebrating those milestones together, we are conscious of the challenges that we still face today.

The real estate market in the Yukon has been highly active through the past year. We saw increasing real estate values with the average sale price of a single detached house in Whitehorse reported at a record high of \$650,700 — an increase of more than \$100,000 over a year. At the same time, the City of Whitehorse is still grappling with low vacancy rates of 1.7 percent.

Combine these with the increasing population, and we have a lot of ground to cover to increase the supply of housing in the Yukon which has further intensified since the COVID-19 pandemic started. We now face the reality of living long term with COVID-19 in our midst. The Yukon Housing Corporation is adapting to the new normal while continuing to ensure a high level of customer service. We adjusted our Housing Corporation's operations during the COVID-19 pandemic to help keep Yukoners safely housed and we remain committed to this goal.

As such, Madam Chair, the corporation balanced the needs to address emerging priorities, while also supporting existing and ongoing projects. We continue with our housing programs to better address Yukoners' needs across the housing continuum and improve housing outcomes for Yukoners. You will see that this work is reflected in the supplementary estimates.

In partnership with CMHC, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, our government launched the Canada-Yukon housing benefit in November 2020. The corporation had an approved budget of \$584,000 in 2020-21, of which \$400,000 supported over 200 Yukon households with rental subsidies and

helped Yukoners recover from the economic effects of COVID-19. Due to the mid-year start of the program, the corporation requested authority to move the remaining \$184,000 to this fiscal year, 2021-22, under the Canada-Yukon housing benefit so that more applicants can benefit over the long term from this rental subsidy.

We were successful in our federal funding application for \$3 million from CMHC under the rapid housing initiative in March 2021 and have completed the design, with construction underway of three community housing triplexes in the communities of Mayo, Watson Lake, and Whitehorse.

As you are all aware, lumber and construction costs increased dramatically, not just here but across Canada. During our tendering process, the costs for construction came in higher than initially anticipated at in excess of \$2.4 million. Yukon Housing Corporation reprioritized funding from its existing budget to cover the unanticipated increase. This increase has been offset against decreases in our unit conversions project of \$1.3 million and our northern housing fund of \$1.1 million respectively.

The initial allocation of \$3 million under the rapid housing initiative and the northern housing fund allocation of \$1.1 million are fully recoverable from the federal government.

This project aligns with key community needs, the corporation's capital asset management plan housing needs assessment, and our work to modernize our community housing program.

Last but not least, work on our 47-unit community housing building at 4th Avenue and Jeckell Street in Whitehorse is well underway, and we are very excited to be moving closer to its completion and providing much needed homes for Yukoners.

The corporation received implementation fees approval for the 47-unit facility at a projected cost of \$20 million, of which \$19.2 million was allocated for construction. Of this amount, \$18 million was approved under the 2020-21 and 2021-22 main estimates for the construction phase.

The corporation moved forward with tendering the project during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to realize the long-term benefits of the construction of 47 new homes; however, the consequences of the pandemic became more evident as the project progressed. As I have highlighted today, the corporation also saw increases in material costs and experienced delays during 2021 that have contributed to an increase in project costs. We therefore requested an increase to the budget of \$3.6 million in the 2021-22 estimates to complete the project. This consisted of \$2.4 million in unused funds from the 2020-21 fiscal year and \$1.2 million due to increased costs of materials and worker isolation costs resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic prevention measures.

Between all Yukon government departments, good work is underway to better understand the COVID-19-related market variables to inform future planning; however, over the short term, the Yukon Housing Corporation identified funding that will allow these projects to move forward in a timely manner to help Yukoners in housing need.

The federal budget released in April 2021 includes opportunities to improve housing in the Yukon, and we look

forward to the support that these funds will have across the housing continuum. We will be working closely with our federal counterparts to learn more about these funding options. Of note, future opportunities may exist for funding areas under our current bilateral agreement. As well, there are additional funds for the rapid housing initiative and the Reaching Home strategy.

The federal budget has also reallocated funding for the national housing co-investment fund. We look forward to forthcoming details on these new and reallocated funding streams. We will continue to engage and advocate for Yukoners with our federal government partners.

We are also excited to share with you some of our significant achievements over this past year. Through our innovative housing partnership with Da Daghay Development Corporation, we have added 28 affordable new homes in Whistle Bend through phase 1 and phase 2 of the River Bend development. Yukon Housing Corporation has helped to find housing solutions and housing stability for 50 individuals and households from our wait-list. At a time of acute housing pressure, we are proud to see a place to call home realized for those who have moved into the housing development.

We also recently announced our support for the Boreal Commons — an 87-unit affordable and rental housing project in Whistle Bend — along with the Government of Canada and the City of Whitehorse. This project is an example of the housing partnerships that Yukon Housing Corporation has been focused on to support increases in affordable rental market housing development. That's not all.

As well as providing homes, we are also delivering on Yukon's climate change strategy. I'm happy to see the outcomes today as Yukoners move into these safe, energy-efficient homes.

As we look forward, we will also be guided by the aging-in-place action plan to address continued growth in aging-in-place housing needs. With this in mind, we are happy to move forward with our mixed-use project in Old Crow, which has been in the planning phase for several years. Construction work began on the tenplex housing complex, which will enable us to respond to the changing housing needs in the community while boosting the Yukon's economy in generating construction jobs.

In conclusion, Madam Chair, the changes to our supplementary estimates have enabled the Yukon Housing Corporation to be innovative and resilient to the changing housing needs in the territory. Our people-centred approach to wellness helps Yukoners thrive.

We are committed to nurturing new initiatives that will help Yukoners find the housing support they need. As we now move into the winter season, it is crucial for everyone to have a safe and affordable place to call home — a home that meets their needs. We will continue to provide essential housing options by building on our partnerships, exploring innovative approaches to help address housing supply solutions, and by making strategic investments for healthy, vibrant, and sustainable communities.

Today, the Yukon Housing Corporation presents responsible first supplementary estimates. I invite members to

treat Committee of the Whole as an opportunity to request further detail on any of the areas included in the supplementary estimates.

Ms. Clarke: I would like to welcome officials from the Yukon Housing Corporation and to thank them for being here today. While I have a moment, I would like to thank the corporation for the work that they did during the housing summit held in October. I can appreciate that many great ideas were identified. I just wanted to say that the Official Opposition would certainly be eager and willing to attend future public discussions on housing.

I had asked during the briefing if I could receive a copy of the report from the summit. I would just like to mention once more here with the minister that, when that becomes available, I would appreciate a copy.

I have some questions for the minister in a number of areas, so I will get started. I will try to keep my questions fairly short in the hope that we are able to move quickly through them today.

I will start on the topic of housing loan programs and initiatives. In May of this year, the minister stated that the Yukon Housing Corporation was rebalancing their role in communities to provide affordable rental housing and home ownership options through private market incentives, or loans directly to Yukoners, as well as subsidy programs. I understand that the rent subsidy program is out of money.

Can the minister please confirm when the program ran out, why it ran out, and what the government is doing about it?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: As a quick response — no, that is not correct. We have not run out of money for our housing benefit. We actually also are happy to say today that we no longer have a wait-list. Therefore, we are, I think, providing either \$200, \$400, \$600, or \$800, depending on people's circumstances. Again, we are still funded. Our agreement is, I believe, an eight-year agreement, as well, that is place in a bilateral relationship with CMHC.

Ms. Clarke: I thank the minister for his answer.

The former down payment assistance program was implemented in 2013 to help Yukoners pay the down payment on their first house. As the minister can imagine, saving for a down payment is increasingly difficult, especially for young Yukoners. The former first mortgage loan program allowed Yukoners to obtain a mortgage to assist them in buying a home when they were unable to obtain a mortgage through conventional methods.

Can the minister explain why the down payment assistance program and the first mortgage loan program were cut under the Liberal government?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First of all, what we are seeing within Whitehorse is that our traditional lenders are providing debt instruments, mortgages, to individuals and that CMHC has to occupy that space where folks can work toward getting the down payment mechanism.

It is important to say that we have tried to really focus on our communities. What we have heard, sitting with Yukoners — whether it be in Teslin, Watson Lake, or Dawson City — is that it has become very difficult in some circumstances to be

able to acquire mortgages in some of those communities, partly because institutions try to cross-reference other assets in those communities before they will provide that funding, and sometimes it is difficult to have something that is equal to what an individual is looking to build.

So, we are working, as well, to increase the amounts that can be funded through our mortgage support programs out into communities. But again, we are seeing other folks occupy the space to provide individuals in Whitehorse with the right mechanisms to build new homes.

Ms. Clarke: Thanks to the minister for his answer.

There is a mortgage program for rural Yukoners. Can the minister confirm if this program is fully subscribed to each year?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: What we try to do is cash-manage within the budget. Right now, what we would say is that everything has been identified or called for, but we have not allocated all of that. We have been working with individuals who have identified our rural supports as something they need, but they are still going through the process of getting ready to actually use that or to build.

I am going to be working with the corporation very closely on that item. If we see some really large growth of interest in our communities to use that program, I am comfortable with our president and others — of sitting with the board and letting them know that. In the case that we have to look at providing more funds to that program, I think that it is a prudent decision, but certainly right now, it seems that the cash that we have allotted for that is meeting the demand.

Again, it is a good question and something that we have to watch very closely. It has been flagged by municipal leaders across the Yukon as a program that is extremely important. We have taken the advice from municipal leaders, which I brought back to the corporation and to the board, about increasing the amount that can be allocated. I had requested an opportunity to speak to newly elected municipal officials at their earliest convenience. That, of course, will be the Association of Yukon Communities. During that conference, I will have an opportunity on early Friday morning just to really talk about one thing, which is how we can work together around housing needs.

Ms. Clarke: Has the minister considered any expansion of the program for Yukoners looking to build their own homes either in the Whitehorse area or in rural Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We have had discussions internally at Yukon Housing Corporation about new ideas of innovation. To be very open, I think that one thing we have always said is that we have seen good ideas from all political parties. There are some things that caught my eye from the Official Opposition — their platform. We have discussed some things inside the Housing Corporation. We are really just looking at what the market looks like and where we can help.

I think it is best to further define those and to build them out before we roll anything out. I think we are keeping a very close eye on what the market looks like and want to ensure that Yukoners have those opportunities. We look at individuals who have come through our school systems. They have grown up

here. In many cases, they receive the Yukon grant and use the Yukon grant to go off to improve their education situation, to get degrees and trades, and then are having difficulty in being able to come home. We are investing in our youth through a lot of the process. I think it's important for us to understand that, when those investments are made and we want those individuals to be back in the Yukon contributing to our economy, to our society, and to their families, we might have to look at innovative ways.

Yes, the quick answer is that we are looking at some concepts, but they are still yet to be rolled out as we define the best possible tools to meet those needs.

Ms. Clarke: I appreciate the answer from the minister. I will now move on to another topic — the social and seniors wait-list. Can the minister please provide the current wait-list for social housing and seniors housing broken down by community, if he has that information?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First of all, our total wait-list number is 453. That is as of August, so I want to be very open with the Assembly. We can have a delta of 10 or 15, where we can see that number increase, and, of course, in some cases, we address that. The 453 is where we were in August. We have been within 10 or 15 of that number.

Breaking it down by community, right now, we have: one Yukon government employee on our wait-list in Beaver Creek; in Carcross, we have four seniors and three non-seniors on our wait-list; Dawson City, where we see our biggest demand, we have 10 seniors and 20 non-seniors on our wait-list; in Carmacks, we have one Yukon government employee on our wait-list.

So, for the House, Madam Chair, if I don't touch on it, there is not an individual in that category.

In Faro, we have one non-senior and one Yukon government employee; in Haines Junction, we have two seniors and six non-seniors; in Mayo, we have two government employees; in Pelly Crossing, one government employee; in Ross River, we have two seniors, seven non-seniors, and one government employee; in Teslin, we have just one non-senior; and in Watson Lake, where our second biggest demand is, we have three seniors, 14 non-seniors, and four Yukon government employees on our wait-list. In Whitehorse, we have 155 seniors, 225 non-seniors, and no government employees on wait-lists. So, the total number of all of Yukon is 176 seniors — all our communities — and 277 non-seniors, for a total of 453. Then, in the category for government employees, we have 11 government employees who are still on our wait-list seeking housing.

Ms. Clarke: I thank the minister for his answer. So, we continue to receive reports that there are Yukon Housing Corporation units that remain empty for long periods of time. Many are reportedly vacant and not being worked on. Can the minister please provide how many Yukon Housing units are currently vacant, and when will they be filled?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I hope I'm not off by one or two here, but what we have been looking at — there are about 20 units right now that we are working on. Those are 20 units that, by Yukon Housing Corporation standards, would be not up to the

standard we would normally have for somebody who is looking for a housing option to move into.

I want to say for the House that we have been speaking with many individuals in our community, whether those are alarms that have been identified by the Anti-Poverty Coalition — we have worked with folks from Safe at Home, and there are individuals in the private sector who are really concerned. What we are trying to do at this point is — we are looking at those 20 units. To be open with the Assembly, we are looking at everything in our continuum that potentially can be used as emergency housing.

So, we have 20 units. Right now, we are trying to make sure that each one of those, if they are not filled, is appropriate to have somebody live in, and we are looking at either working with other organizations to try to find housing options for folks — but we may have to use those. They may not be exactly of the quality that we would normally use to rent out, but based on the situation we're in, they could be part of our emergency housing solution.

Ms. Clarke: Is the minister aware of any families with children who are currently on the Yukon Housing Corporation list who are being housed in hotels at this time? If yes, what is being done to ensure that these families are provided adequate housing in a reasonable time?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: That is a very good question. We are very open about the situation of housing right now. We think that there are about 63 children who are in housing that is not, what we believe, appropriate for them. In some cases, we are working with other departments like Health and Social Services, and we may have children who are, with their families, living in something that is substandard. That is the number that has been provided to us in our meetings with the Anti-Poverty Coalition. Our latest meeting was just the other day. Again, that is the sense we have.

What are we doing? Really, I think that this supplementary budget speaks to many initiatives. Truly, I think that the Housing Corporation and the board have made decisions for the most investment that we have seen in affordable housing. We want our projects that we are leading to come online, which are, of course, our units at Jeckell as well as Cornerstone — with partners as well as Boreal and Riverbend. We have a lot of new stock that is coming online.

We know that we have the highest proportion of social housing in the country but, at the same time, we know that our demand still means that we need to do more. We are looking at those projects coming online.

The other thing that we are doing is going out to a number of development corporations and having the same discussion as I'm going to have with municipalities. What we are really trying to do is to completely de-risk the ability to build affordable housing. What I mean by that is that, in some cases, we are using the programs that we provide with — essentially, it's a municipal matching grant. Many municipalities have taken this on, and then we match that. It can go up to, I believe, \$1 million — \$500,000 from each organization. That really takes down some of the overhead costs that organizations have through the tax regime or other things when they build.

What we are really trying to do is look to see what we are spending in many of these cases on housing units, specifically where individuals or families are, we will say, “underhoused”. Then we are moving out to the stakeholders or partners — our First Nation governments — that may have traditional territory there. It might be in one of our communities — and how can we make a commitment to you to look at leasing long term some of the units that you may build? What we are seeing when we do that, in many cases, is that we're building a bankable project where corporations, as one example, can go back to the bank or their financial institution and show that a government with a double-A bond rating, I believe — I will leave that to the Finance minister, but I believe that is a very good rating — which really makes it a simple decision for financial institutions to provide them with funds. Then what we are doing is just reallocating the funds that we have been putting into those other parts of the housing continuum and moving it to a better solution.

That's not the same across the board. We have offered it up to all development corporations. Some folks are in a different place than others, depending on what they want to build, but that is going to be part of our solution. That has been the success story with Riverbend and Da Daghay. That is why, at this point, not only are they very happy about the units that they are building now, they are back at the table with us and want to continue to build as quickly as possible. They are very eager to do that and have built relationships with their financial institutions where those institutions are ready to continue to fund.

That gives you a snapshot. I don't know if it does justice to go through an hour of things that we are doing. I am going to leave it to questions, but we certainly have a number of things that are underway to meet those demands and to solve some of the problems that are in front of us.

Ms. Clarke: I thank the minister for his answers. I will now move on to questions on Jeckell Street housing.

I noted that the minister mentioned the Jeckell Street housing project and some of the details. I have some questions on this new housing development. When is the Jeckell Street facility supposed to be completed?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Late spring 2022.

Ms. Clarke: How many units will be available? How many of each type — for example, bedroom, family units, et cetera? How many people are going to be housed from the current wait-list upon completion? How are people being chosen from the wait-list?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I'm just going to give a quick overview of our project on Jeckell, and it will touch on some of the answers that the member opposite is looking for. This building has 47 units that include bachelor suites and one-, two-, and three-bedroom units; 10 units will be barrier-free. This project is current scheduled to be completed in late spring of 2022.

The project increases the number of units on the site from six units in the former building to 47 units in the new building. Through consultation and design, we determined that, based on the shape and size of our lot size and the community outdoor space, the maximum building size would allow for 47 units.

We have a standard process that we use when it comes to dealing with the wait-list. Really, we are going to use the same criteria to make the allocations to this unit. This will be done over a couple of months.

From my understanding, women fleeing violence tend to be at the top of the list. Sometimes it's difficult — I am sure that all MLAs here in this Legislative Assembly have individuals who reach out to them who have been on the wait-list and are wondering why they have not moved or, in some cases, why they have moved down the list. That is, again, because that is the criteria we use. It has not changed. It has been very stable over the last number of years — and, I believe, through successive governments — but it is really about people who are in the most vulnerable positions being able to move to that housing first.

A little bit about the breakdown and the style of housing that it is — it's a mixed-income model, and it is a new approach to allocating housing that will provide homes for clients with a range of incomes, all within the existing housing income limits. We will support clients with deeper shallow subsidies according to their need. This is a community housing approach that enables social diversity and supports better social outcomes and fiscal responsibility. All tenants will pay an affordable rent, according to their income.

In mixed-use housing, different client groups from our community, including seniors, families, and individuals, are housed together in multi-unit buildings. This means that we can better respond to the dynamic housing needs of a community and focus on creating healthy and vibrant communities within multi-unit buildings.

We worked with local housing stakeholders through several events and meetings in 2019 to develop our mixed-use and mixed-income housing model. Initially, we looked at including a market rental component to our mixed-income housing, but after consultation, we will continue to prioritize Yukon households within our existing household income limits currently used for community housing. Mixed-use and mixed-income housing is a complementary model aimed at addressing emerging community housing needs in the context of a growing, diverse, and aging population.

I will likely have to get back to the House only because, depending on where the priority is on the list for individuals, as we look at our breakdown of 47 units — some are two, some are three, some are one. We could be housing up to 75 people or more, pending the makeup of individuals, units, and families that are on the wait-list, but as we get close in the spring and in spring budget debate, I certainly can come back and identify those numbers more clearly for you.

Ms. Clarke: I appreciate the answer.

I am going now to move on to 5th and Rogers. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources indicated that the Yukon Housing Corporation is the lead on 5th and Rogers. I would like to follow up on those questions to the housing minister. Could the minister provide a timeline on when he expects that land parcel to be released to the private sector for future housing development?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We have seen 5th and Rogers as a block of land that has had really, over successive years, different concepts, and different organizations were looking to use that land. I don't have the full history; it predates my time in government, but certainly it has been talked about a lot. Our approach has been to scour every part of the City of Whitehorse, if not the Yukon, to look for available land and look for partnerships to build out — projects that we need to meet the demand that we are seeing.

With 5th and Rogers, one of the things that played out was that we really want to see rental housing. Part of the challenge that has happened within the housing continuum is that the private sector has continued to make investments — except for some of the bigger projects that I mentioned earlier — and made decisions, in many cases, to build strata title. Strata title is a form of title, but really, it is where you find condominium developments. That is done because you can realize your return on that investment very quickly. The challenge is that it doesn't make a dramatic impact to our rental market.

What we have seen in other jurisdictions across Canada is larger organizations, usually called “real estate investment trusts”, that are either building rental housing or purchasing other rental housing and putting it into an investment pool. Large investment entities tend to look at that as a good investment — a good long-term investment. Of course, when you see the demand across this country from city to city, that makes sense.

With 5th and Rogers, part of what we have been doing between the Yukon Housing Corporation and Energy, Mines and Resources is to try to make sure that we define what gets built on that piece of land. We want to see rental housing. We want to see it affordable, but we need rental stock. In 2019, there was an expression of interest that was put out. That expression of interest had a number of local organizations and corporations respond to it. After that expression of interest was finished, some of the organizations decided to continue to work with us but felt that maybe what was being looked at for 5th and Rogers was not within the scope of the work or their mandate. We have gone back into discussions to see, with the remaining parties, if there is an opportunity to develop that.

We have had discussions and we are going to continue to have some discussions, but inevitably, if we can't get to a place where we have a project that is really looking at rental housing, then we would go back to an RFP, open it up, and see if there are other interested parties.

I would like to see — I guess I can put this with my responsibilities — whoever is going to develop it doing preparation to that site by the summer of 2022. We do not want to see us miss time to do site prep. There is some work that has to be done there. There are two concerns with 5th and Rogers, really: one is geotechnical stability, which is the need for a berm and something that is fairly standard along what we would call the clay cliffs in the downtown Whitehorse area; and the second part is looking at legacy environmental concerns. There has been a lot of work done by Community Services, as well as Energy, Mines and Resources — but primarily, I believe, Community Services — to look at remedies for that.

We think we have defined the efforts that would have to be in place to mitigate any of those environmental concerns, and we are getting to a place where we can define what that berm looks like. Those are two critical things that anybody needs to know before they develop it, and I think that our early conversations with the parties that have been part of the expression of interest seem to be leading in the appropriate way to do some significant building on that site.

Ms. Clarke: I heard that the minister is going to put an expression of interest, but could you confirm: Would it be some sort of a public tendering or offering, or would it be a request for qualifications? We are just curious about what is being considered at this time.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: No, not that we are going to — the expression of interest was completed in September 2020, and it was run through the Department of Community Services. That was concluded.

My comments were that we have gone through a process to have discussions with individuals who had been part of that process. If we can seek a solution that meets what we want to see on that site, then we can begin negotiations on allocation of the land, and if we do not get to a place that meets our needs on that site, we will go back out to a request for proposals, just a public process at that point.

Ms. Clarke: I appreciate the minister's answer.

I am going to move on. I am looking for an update on the Normandy project. In the spring, the minister noted that the 84-unit residence for seniors was anticipated for completion in the fall of 2022, and the Yukon Housing Corporation is providing \$3.5 million to support 10 units in the building for Yukon government to use for 20 years, with \$500,000 from the housing initiative fund and \$500,000 from the municipal matching rental construction program. Could the minister confirm that those costs and timelines remain the same — Yukon Housing Corporation will be provided 10 units to use for 20 years — and what will happen to the units after 20 years?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: In keeping with — I touched on it in some of the opening comments — our aging-in-place philosophy and the direction of the *Putting People First* recommendations and the housing action plan for Yukon, Yukon Housing Corporation is working with other relevant Government of Yukon departments and external partners to support seniors where they want to live.

Currently under construction, the Normandy Manor will be a privately owned, 84-unit residence for seniors. Anticipated completion is the fall of 2022. The information that we're getting from the ownership group is that this is still in place.

The president of the Yukon Housing Corporation just made me aware that, on November 15, there will be an open house. We can send that to all MLAs. It's not on-site, but it's actually at the Gold Rush.

One of the things that happened — and the ownership group made us aware — is that, as soon as it was announced, folks were reaching out to them to try to figure out how they could lock down a spot. I know that now, as they are getting closer to getting completed a very significant project, they are

having these information sessions. We will share that information.

In support of this project, you are absolutely correct. Yukon Housing Corporation is providing \$3.5 million for the 10 units in the building. At the end of 20 years, or as we get close to get that, the Yukon Housing Corporation has the ability to renegotiate a lease for a longer period of time, or those units could go back into the portfolio that the organization has to lease out or to rent out to others. Again, \$500,000 was from our housing initiative fund and \$500,000 was from the municipal matching rental construction program.

Normandy is being built and will be operated through KBC Developments, a partnership of local businesses that includes Ketza Construction, Borud Enterprises, and Northern Vision Development. Once completed, this residence will meet the needs of seniors who want housing with support services, such as meals and hospitality services, thereby filling a gap in existing accommodations.

Normandy Manor provides an essential housing option in Whitehorse between individuals living in their own homes and those living in long-term care homes. Our government's support for Normandy Manor is very cost effective compared to the cost of long-term care.

While we have this opportunity, I want to, just for the Assembly, commend Dave Borud for his work on this. He and his family have been known to be very strong entrepreneurs in our community.

Their work — whether it be in manufacturing, telecommunications, fibre, or this project — they have been leaders. I don't think that this project would be where it is without his leadership, and he has a very strong partnership group. I know that they see this, from our discussions with them, as just one step in what they believe can be developed in Whitehorse to help these needs.

I hope that this gives the member opposite a good understanding of what we are hoping to see here. It is not just the 84 units, but those individuals may have been living in the homes that they have had for many, many years, and it could be that they have already moved into an apartment or a condominium, whatever it is. What we are seeing is that we are going to have that opportunity to have 84 new units, but we are also going to see those individuals either sell or rent out the units that they are currently in. It's really a two-for-one on all of these, and that is why we continue to have very supportive conversations with Vimy, which may be asked about later.

We see that as an opportunity to fill a gap between where individuals are now and before they have to make a choice around long-term care. It still provides a sense of independence as well as community, which we think is very important when we look at aging in place.

I look forward to more questions on Normandy or even Vimy.

Ms. Clarke: Thank you for the answer. I am going to move on now to the topic of community land trusts.

The minister has mentioned a community land trust project. Could the minister indicate what responsibilities

Yukon Housing Corporation may have in development of the community land trust?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The Yukon has been experiencing an acute housing shortage, and homes are increasing in price. That's why our government's mandate includes support for the establishment of a community land trust here in the territory. The innovative housing model supports a key goal of the housing action plan for Yukon to provide alternative land tenure and alternative home ownership options for Yukoners. A community land trust keeps housing affordable by having a non-profit organization hold the land in trust.

Residents can live in and own the housing long term while keeping the resale cost — which is key here — keeping the resale cost of the home significantly lower for the next buyer. We are lucky to have a non-profit organization working to achieve this goal in Whitehorse. Really what it has been is a group of extremely talented individuals who work in a number of different areas of architecture and engineering and have essentially put their time into this project because of their passion for the community.

The Northern Community Land Trust has a plan to develop a community land trust in Whitehorse over the next three years. The Yukon Housing Corporation has provided support for this project through the fourth intake of the housing initiatives fund project concept stream. Again, the Northern Community Land Trust has also applied for funding from a federal fund targeted to support land trust development projects. The Yukon Housing Corporation is providing support throughout this process.

The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources is primarily the contact at this time because they are trying to find a piece of land that is appropriate for their activities. Then we will continue to support them as they identify that land and begin to get into the structure. At this time, I can't break down the style or type of housing. Right now, we are just really focused on finding an appropriate piece of land and making sure that the governance mechanisms that are in place are supporting them to leverage bilaterally from the federal government. Once those building blocks are in place, I think that we will have more information about what they are looking to build.

Again, these folks are really focused on sustainable, cost-effective buildings.

Ms. Clarke: I have a follow-up question. How much land does the minister anticipate will be needed for the community land trust and how would the government choose the area to develop a community land trust?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I apologize, but I don't have an estimate of how many acres they are looking at. My sense is that they are not starting with a significantly big request for land. My understanding of the process — maybe the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources can speak to this a bit more when he's back, but I think they are looking at what the zoning is on existing commissioner's land, first and foremost, and then seeing if that fits.

My sense from discussions with some of the individuals on this team is looking at a very affordable and sustainable approach. Is there adequate public transit that is close to this?

Are there amenities close to these lands? These are all going to be things that they are going to be taking into consideration, but I would think that we can get a more fulsome answer when Energy, Mines and Resources is up as well.

Ms. Clarke: Madam Chair, I appreciate the answer, and I thank the minister for that. I am now going to move on to a topic on housing in rural Yukon. In May of this year, the minister committed to \$3 million to support the construction of three new community triplexes in Mayo, Watson Lake, and Whitehorse. Further, YG allocated \$200,000 to explore deployable mobile home options to ease immediate housing pressures. Can the minister confirm the status of these buildings and whether the mobile homes have been secured?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Our government acknowledges the immediate benefit to the Yukon from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's rapid housing initiative, which is the program that we are using for this work. This initiative is providing opportunities to build affordable, efficient houses for Yukoners in urgent housing need. Through the rapid housing initiative round one, Yukon Housing Corporation was approved, as the member opposite noted, to build three triplexes in Mayo, Watson Lake, and Whitehorse. The addresses for these buildings are: 306 Third Avenue in Mayo; 100 Morley Crescent in Watson Lake; and 33 Wann Road in Whitehorse.

Again, the federal rapid housing initiative provides \$3 million for the construction of Yukon Housing Corporation's three triplex projects while the Yukon Housing Corporation will provide an additional investment. As I touched on in the preamble, we saw very significant costs to build these based on the increased price of materials and construction costs. So, it's \$2.4 million more than where we were — almost to the point of a doubling the cost within this.

I sat with the leadership team and discussed the decisions on this. We knew that we had limited-time funding with our money from the rapid housing, as I understood it. We thought it was prudent to move forward. Even with the increased costs, we thought that the most appropriate thing to do was to move forward on those units. We're looking at an increased cost from where we thought we were going to be. We talked a little bit in our opening statement about where we moved dollars from to do that, but again, I think it's the right thing to do.

For the other part of the question which was around mobile homes, we are still in a scoping and design phase of that work, so that work continues. But, again, I think what we're trying to not just signal but to illustrate is that we are looking at every potential option here, not just for short-term critical needs, but for medium and long term for our housing continuum.

Ms. Clarke: Madam Chair, I have two follow-up questions on this topic. Can the minister provide further details around the \$40-million funding pot under the national housing co-investment? What are the plans for this money? What housing initiatives are being planned for each Yukon community? \$20 million was negotiated with CMHC to support community housing projects directly managed by the Yukon Housing Corporation.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: In 2018, the federal government launched the \$13.2-billion national housing co-investment fund under the national housing strategy to support new construction and revitalization of affordable housing within provinces and territories. In recognition of the additional needs in northern communities, \$40 million of this funding was allocated to the Yukon. This funding is called the “northern carve-out”.

Under the terms negotiated with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation for the northern carve-out, \$20 million will support community housing projects in the Yukon. It will be prioritized by community needs and will be directly managed by the Yukon Housing Corporation. The additional \$20 million will be managed by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to support indigenous governments, organizations, community housing providers, and/or private sector projects.

We will ensure that the federal funding we receive supports Yukoners’ housing needs and aligns with the implementation of the housing action plan, the Safe at Home plan to end and prevent homelessness, and the aging-in-place plan. Again, what we are really trying to illustrate today is that those are our guiding documents in our decision-making and so we continue to refer back to that set of values, as we start to look to roll out these funds.

Again, our senior team and specifically our president have built a very strong relationship with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. As stated by the member opposite, there is \$40 million in total, but \$20 million over there. We try, if possible, to look at projects, in some cases together, at least to figure out where we can find synergies within this housing.

The Housing Corporation intends to have our funds fully committed by 2025-26. Some are at different places with some of these projects. I will give a sense of some of the projects.

The Watson Lake Housing First — we haven’t said exactly how many units; we are continuing to have discussions. We worked with a third party to meet with the community and to have discussions. Certainly, when I was in Watson Lake in September, this topic came up and we are really trying to ensure that we are working closely with all of the community. I had an opportunity when I was there to meet with our housing folks, but also had an opportunity to meet with the mayor who has just been re-elected about what his thoughts were on housing. As well, there is a very well-represented chamber of commerce in Watson Lake and there were discussions as well just trying to understand what is going to be best to meet the needs. This discussion started with the Liard First Nation early on, and we are continuing to have those discussions. That is where we are looking — between 2021 and 2023; that is our goal.

We are looking at another duplex project in Dawson City and Korbo, phase 2. There is land available. There is a significant interest in Dawson City. If you wonder why I am touching on these, when we went down that list of needs, we know that Dawson City and Watson Lake are number one and two when we think about our communities. Again, that’s why we are focusing our funds in these particular communities first.

We are still working with communities. I think that the member opposite will understand that there is always a lot of dialogue in this House about — when decisions are being made,

have we had those thorough and respectful conversations with communities and partners? That is really what we are trying to make sure we do here — to emphasize the need to do that so we know what the needs are in those communities through consultation and conversations. Watson Lake and Dawson City are our first target areas to allocate our \$20 million.

Ms. Clarke: I will now move on to another question — Haines Junction seniors. In the summer of 2020, the St. Elias Seniors Society was kicked out of their meeting area in the seniors facility during the pandemic. The previous minister promised that they would be back in by November 30, 2020. The current minister said in the spring that he would get them back in their space. I understand that they are now being asked to provide \$2 million in liability insurance. They are also now being told that they need to find funding to upgrade a glass door.

Could the minister indicate why they require insurance to access the meeting space and upgrade a door? Could the minister also indicate when they will be able to return?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I appreciate the question. In listening to the question, you would think that some very dramatic action happened at the seniors facility when people were kicked out. We have to look at factually what has played out. There is a difference of opinion, first and foremost, among the residents of that space, as I understand it. Not everybody is on the same page about this common-use area, so we need to be respectful to everybody who is living there. They have a great volunteer and leader in that community. I have had communication from her. She was a long-time colleague of mine before being in the Assembly.

We have tried to make sure that we meet the needs of the clients who are there, that we get to use that space appropriately, and that we support folks. Our understanding was that the request under the liability was not a showstopper but, as the president just said to me, what we are going to continue to do is see where we can help folks out. If there is a need for us to try to come up with a solution around insurance needs, we will do that.

In the interim, we did host a flu clinic in that space within the last couple of weeks, so the space has been used for the benefit of individuals who are there. It’s a very important space. The space is critical. There are individuals who come and spend time there from outside of the tenant group, as I understand it, and that is really where there has been some concern. Again, we made that commitment. We reached out to the group. I had an opportunity to speak with the folks who were waiting on some documentation from us. After I spoke with them, I also reached out to the Member for Kluane, who has been a great advocate for this particular situation. I let him know that we were working through the last of it. Again, any time there have been any bumps on that one, he has let me know.

I think that we are getting to a place we need to get to. I’m sorry for the disruption for the folks who have wanted to use the space. Hopefully, for the folks who had concerns about people using the space, we have been respectful in our approach to meeting the needs of all seniors in Haines Junction.

Ms. Clarke: I just have a follow-up question for the minister. When can they go back and use the space?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that answer lies in — if the criteria that has been laid out — if the organization that has been looking to use it can fulfill that or if there be a need for us to come up with solution for them. Depending on which one of those happens, that will define exactly the time. What the Assembly needs to know is that we are fully committed to getting people back in there. Sometimes the way in which some of this regulation and work is laid out is cumbersome. We understand that, but what I'm trying to do is find a solution so that the folks who were critical in building that beautiful community have the opportunity to use the space.

Ms. Clarke: I just have another follow-up question. Where is the decision going to be? Would it lie on the minister or in the community? That's my follow-up question. I just really need to know when the seniors would be able to return and where the decision would lie.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I wanted to be very polite today and respectful to the organization. I see that the member opposite is getting some extra questions passed on. Here is our challenge. The organization is currently not in good corporate standing, so that is what has to be done first. We need the organization to be in good corporate standing so we can support them. Once that's done, then we can get there. I didn't really want to get into that discussion today, but that's the scenario after a series of questions on this.

Ms. Clarke: I am now going to move on. I'm going to be asking questions on the rapid housing initiative.

So, on the rapid housing initiative that is leading to the purchase and conversion of the High Country Inn into social housing, reports have indicated that the cost will be covered by the Government of Yukon using money from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. The ownership of the hotel will then be transferred to the Safe at Home Society.

Can the minister confirm that this is accurate? What are the timelines for this project?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: No, I would have to state that it is not exactly accurate. There are two funding sources. I will give a bit of an overview and see if I can reflect that around the state of the project.

The Yukon Housing Corporation supports the Safe at Home Society in their application to the rapid housing initiative funding round two — it's called the "cities stream" — for a Whitehorse-based project to meet the needs of vulnerable Yukoners. What has triggered this is that a decision was made by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to provide funding to cities, which is a bit unique for Whitehorse. The city hasn't occupied that space in this form before, but it was something that was provided to at least two, if not three, of the northern capitals.

Again, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's rapid housing initiative funding has the potential to help house vulnerable Yukoners, especially as the pandemic has exacerbated existing housing and homelessness challenges in the territory. We expect a federal announcement in late fall on

this project, so we are waiting to see if this project, first of all, is going to be fully funded.

The Safe at Home Society has proposed buying and renovating the High Country Inn at 4051 4th Avenue to provide 55 units of permanent supportive housing for vulnerable Yukoners, including units for women, youth, and indigenous Yukoners. Support for this project showcases the collaborative efforts of all orders of government with NGO partners and the private sector to increase housing options for Yukoners. If the Safe at Home Society is approved for the rapid housing initiative round two funding, they may also be eligible for funding through existing programs, such as the housing initiatives fund and the municipal matching rental construction grant. The project could potentially support clients on Yukon Housing Corporation's wait-list who may need housing supports.

I want to make sure that I get the appropriate information for the member concerning construction. Their timeline, if approved for funding, would be to begin construction in the start of the new year, in January. The way that the rapid housing program works is that they are looking for proponents to complete their work within a year.

Ms. Clarke: So, the minister confirmed that the project will provide 55 units, as reported, and the reported estimates of a purchase price are \$10 million and renovations are \$5 million. Can he confirm that number? Can the minister provide more background on how this \$15-million project came together since May?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: This project was something that first came to light in December 2020. There was an application submitted to rapid housing. There were a number of entities that provided letters of support to Safe at Home. My understanding is that, at that time, the application was not approved through rapid housing. The federal government came back and allocated money to a number of capital cities in northern Canada. Only applications that had been in round one and had not been approved were applicable to round two. This was the only project application, I think, that was not funded but was from round one; therefore, it was really the only potential applicant.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation contacted the City of Whitehorse — to their surprise, I think, because this is not something normal that they would be funded — and talked about this potential project. We are looking at two funding sources. We are looking at \$10 million that would be coming from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and \$5 million from the Yukon Housing Corporation to complete this project.

Ms. Clarke: I just have two follow-up questions. The centre's website indicates that the project application included two hotels, totalling 117 units.

Could the minister indicate if a second hotel has been identified or not, and what process might be underway to secure that second hotel and additional 62 units?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We are not aware of any other hotel or another hotel being part of this project. I think that the only dialogue that our team has had has been on that one particular

piece of infrastructure that we are aware of. It has been clarified to us that it is just what's known as the main High Country Inn hotel and not the adjacent space, which is the old Lions pool, but is known as the convention centre.

Ms. Clarke: I am now going to move on to another question on rent control. There has been a lot of concern from Yukoners around the rent control policy that was implemented as part of the CAS agreement with the NDP. There has been a lot of talk about people being evicted. Many people are struggling to find alternative housing.

Can the minister indicate whether the Yukon Housing Corporation has seen an increase in applications for social and seniors housing since rent control was implemented?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Madam Chair, over the last year, we have seen our wait-list continue to increase. We have seen that happen before the rent cap and we have seen that continue to rise after the rent cap was put in place.

When we look at our point-in-time count for homelessness, we actually have gone down from the April count versus our previous count. I don't want to paint a picture that is inaccurate. It's fair to say that we are closely watching what the rent cap treatments are doing to the market. We are looking to see where there is significant disruption.

My colleague, the Minister of Community Services, is working with the landlord and tenant office. We are watching to see what has played out. To be open to the Assembly, I spoke some thoughts about it in December 2020. I think that we saw some real increases happening; therefore, because of those increases in rent, and through the CASA, we have looked at this as an option, but we are still monitoring what the fallout of that is and how many people are actually in a good position and how many people it has protected and, again, what it has done to disrupt. We are watching that and we are having discussions with stakeholders, whether it is the Anti-Poverty Coalition or others.

It goes without saying that there are lots of individuals who are in our community who believe that there needs to be approaches to how we legislate and regulate these things. At this point, I will leave it at that.

Ms. Clarke: I'm just looking at the website of the Community Housing Transformation Centre. On the website, it says: "Housing First means 2 hotels converted into 117 units of affordable housing in Whitehorse, Yukon — Safe at Home Society RHI Application Seed Funding."

Can the minister update on the status of this online — that's where I got that information. Could he clarify, please?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I can. What we've stated is that we're not aware. We can look at some website that's there. We'll look it up and take a look at it, but there's no big smoking gun here. We're aware of one hotel. We're working with folks on that. I appreciate the fact that there's something in an application on a particular website. We'll look it up, but to be very open with the House, we're not aware of any other structure other than the High Country Inn that's part of this Safe at Home project. If there is, I will make a commitment to come back to the House. But, again, I'm not aware of any other hotel that's part of this particular project.

Ms. Clarke: Madam Chair, I am now going to move on to another question. I'm wondering if the Yukon Housing Corporation has ever put out a survey to clients to get a sense of their satisfaction with services, how the corporation is doing, and perhaps areas that could be addressed. Will the minister consider the creation of such a survey that is targeted to clients and staff about seniors and social housing?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will start by saying that the last surveys that we did were in 2019 and 2020. Part of our strategic planning is to ensure that we do go out with a series of surveys to look at our client satisfaction. I have also tried, in the short time of being in this role, to spend a bit of time speaking with our clients, whether they are seniors here in Whitehorse or individuals who are in some of our affordable housing.

We agree with the opposition. We think this is very important for us to understand how to best provide the appropriate housing to our clients and, again, probably the best way to define how we can improve in particular areas.

When we complete the next survey process, I'll make sure that we have an opportunity to make the House aware.

Ms. Clarke: I am now going to move on and ask another question on security. Several concerns have been raised with us regarding security in seniors housing complexes over the past few years. Can the minister provide an update on what policies or actions have been taken by the corporation to address security concerns?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Madam Chair, the Yukon Housing Corporation has been in contact with tenants in our downtown Whitehorse multi-unit residential buildings to better understand safety concerns and to ensure that tenants are aware of safety practices. We are currently working toward the installation of security cameras in all of our multi-unit buildings in Whitehorse, and we are completing a privacy impact assessment prior to commissioning the system to ensure that we protect our clients' privacy. The majority of tenants have requested security cameras, both individually and at tenant meetings, over several years. Some tenants have expressed concerns about their privacy as well. Cameras will not be operational until two key pieces are in place: a video surveillance policy and a privacy impact assessment. Both are under development. These two pieces will ensure that we have processes in place to respect our tenants' privacy. Tenants have been provided advance notice of the installation of the cameras and they have been given contact information to further discuss any concerns.

Yukon Housing Corporation maintains a good working relationship with the safer communities and neighbourhoods unit. SCAN can intervene when there are suspected illegal activities. I hope that gives a bit of a sense about how we are approaching some of the security issues and concerns. I have heard this from a number of seniors, primarily, and it is something that we are taking very seriously. We are just making sure that we are following the rules that are in place around privacy but hopefully giving a sense of comfort to our seniors who are living in these units.

Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Ms. Clarke: Madam Chair, I am going back to Watson Lake housing with just one follow-up question. In June of this year, the minister provided some information around the development of the planned Housing First facility in Watson Lake. There were no concrete plans for the facility but, according to the minister, much work was underway.

Can the minister please provide an update on this project and next steps?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: As we stated early on today, we know that Watson Lake had some of the biggest needs in rural Yukon. It would help again to inform us of our housing needs development decisions. We completed a housing needs assessment in Watson Lake. We had spoken about that earlier in the House.

The Yukon Housing Corporation board recently met with community leaders in Watson Lake. That is one of those important discussions that just happened either just at the end of August or early September, just before I was in Watson Lake. The Yukon Housing Corporation has recently purchased land in Watson Lake in order to build a supportive housing project. We look forward to hosting future engagements with the community on this project. Planning and design for construction will continue into the 2021-22 fiscal year and construction on the project will begin in the next fiscal year.

As well, through a federal funding program with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, we are currently constructing the triplex that we discussed earlier. Since June, we have had another opportunity for our board to go and meet with community leaders and we have now acquired a piece of land in Watson Lake that we believe will meet the needs for what we are looking to build. Again, on some of the finer points of design and exactly the amount of units, we still haven't made a decision because there are still some future conversations to have with stakeholders in Watson Lake.

Ms. Clarke: Which communities is the Yukon Housing Corporation currently or planning to build in and what kind of housing?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that, first, it is important to touch on the fact that there are really unique circumstances from community to community. I haven't had an opportunity to get to every Yukon community to talk about housing specifically since the spring of this year, but I had an opportunity to get to most of our communities. I can maybe give an indication of some of the discussions, thoughts, and ideas that we have. There are also the communities that I didn't have chance to get to, such as Old Crow, where we do have some significant building that's underway right now.

First of all, when I think of the Kluane region, in most situations, I'm sitting down with the First Nation government, especially if there is not a municipality there, trying to figure out ways to partner together — for us again to go back to those early points where we try to de-risk projects and to seek and meet needs in communities. I think, whether we have an opportunity in the future to work with the development corporation that's owned by the First Nation in White River, I think that's a potential and, of course, we're going to continue to monitor the needs in that community. Right now, we really just have an individual who is a Yukon government employee who is on our wait-list.

We've had significant conversations with Kluane First Nation and that's really about potential development in Burwash. Chief Dickson has indicated that they're having some staffing needs and housing can be a challenge to that. Again, we put it out to the First Nation that we're open to those discussions, whether they use their community corporation — either one of their corporations that they have — their community investment corporation or their more external investment arm — that's up to them. Certainly, we've said that we would like to be building in some sort of a partnership or making a commitment to them so they can build in Burwash.

In Haines Junction, we have these discussions and we put them out to their community corporation. Dakwakada really kind of stays out of that space. I did have a meeting with the CEO of Dakwakada and offered that up. We think that having the corporations build the space out is going to be key, especially in Haines Junction — this makes sense. There is both settlement land and fee simple land that's owned by the nation and their corporation. We have offered to do some work there.

We specifically talked about Yukon Housing Corporation-led projects in Dawson City and in Watson Lake and we've had an opportunity to speak with those; the same with Old Crow.

When you look at Pelly as a community, it's a bit more difficult. I had the opportunity to tour with the MLA who is our Speaker and met with Selkirk First Nation. But when you're looking at that, part of that challenge is we have always had sort of a unique relationship with Selkirk First Nation where they provided housing and we lease that housing. The community is built on settlement lands. We are seeing this moving which, of course, was led by Kwanlin Dün, and now we are seeing a number of other self-governing Nations looking to — of course, they have their lands act in place and now they are seeking an order-in-council from the federal government. Once we have that, we work with the Justice department here at the Yukon government in order to use the Land Titles office to register a lease. Once we can register a lease, individuals can make their projects bankable. They can go out to traditional financial institutions to fund their projects.

At this time in Pelly, we have offered — if the Nation wants to lead, we will be there with them. I think, over time, we will have other opportunities when there is a chance to lease lands in the future.

In Mayo — we talked a little bit about our triplex, which is underway right now. Just to clarify, the project in Old Crow is a tenplex, which is in motion now.

In Carcross, we are still identifying a land parcel to have a Yukon Housing Corporation-led project. Later this week — the Yukon Development Corporation has reached out to us and wants to meet to look at some potential projects in that area.

In Teslin, we work with the First Nation on some joint efforts around land development. There still seems to be a housing need there. We are meeting with both the First Nation and Mayor Curran. That has been identified to us. We haven't looked at a project yet. We are trying to support the community. The community itself went down the road of looking at more of a sustainable, tiny house project. I apologize if I don't have all the details for the Assembly, but that has been held back at this point. I think there were some concerns around location. We have offered to work the municipality or the First Nation if there is a potential need for housing.

Just a few years ago, the Housing Corporation worked hard in Ross River to complete a number of units there. I haven't had an opportunity this summer to get out and have a renewed conversation around housing in the community.

In Faro — I have kind of gone through the statistics. Faro was in a very unique situation compared to other communities, where there was more housing than need. It seems to me that a lot of that housing has been now either purchased and folks are living there or, because of the Faro reclamation project that is underway, that has led to more individuals in the community.

It is also important that, within Whitehorse, we still have two First Nations and some of their traditional lands move outside of our municipal boundaries, so we continue to be in constant dialogue with Kwanlin Dün, but through our rapid housing initiative, we did work with Ta'an Kwäch'än Council on helping them to purchase 11 mobile home units as well.

Before I sit down, I just want to do a quick run-through in my mind of the map of the Yukon and think if I missed any communities along the way. I think that gives a pretty decent snapshot from memory of what we are looking at. Every opportunity that we have had to reach out to development corporations or others that make sensible partners, we have used. Some folks are making this a priority for them; other folks have a number of other things that they want to work on ahead of partnering with us on new housing solutions.

Ms. Clarke: I appreciate the answers from the minister.

My final question is in the context of future planning — not present but future planning. Can the minister provide an outline of the corporation's plans for addressing housing needs in each community? Are there building plans in the works for either social or seniors housing?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Carmacks — I spoke with the members of the council in Carcross this week who really wanted us to go back and look at some housing solutions with their development corporation. Those discussions were led by elected officials from Carmacks and discussions that took place at the Yukon Forum. The development corporation in Carmacks has built some very, very nice units along the Yukon River and I think that they are looking to continue to build that out.

We think about generally the question: Where do we see housing going in the future and what is our plan? Again, we're

going to stick to the strategic planning process. We're in the midst of some of that work already as we get to the end of it. We have some of those guiding documents that are still very relevant — whether it's *Putting People First* or aging in place or our homelessness action plan.

I would just say this in closing: We have the ability to change the state of housing in the Yukon. That's why I think that this is a challenging, challenging undertaking but extremely exciting, because so many complex problems that exist sometimes just don't have solutions. They call them by many terms, but a wicked problem. This is certainly a wicked problem. But, by bringing folks together — and that was really part of what we wanted to do with our housing summit. There have been meetings where the players and the housing continuum have come together. Mary was part of that — our president — in some of the early stages way back in, I think, 2013. As well, we needed to get corporations in the room, folks who are doing the financing, and pulling them all together.

It's not that there's going to be sort of another larger plan that's going to identify a whole bunch of things that nobody has thought about before. We're really going to go back and try to get the things happening that people have talked about for a long time, which is to embrace chapter 22 and make sure that development corporations have the best possible opportunities to be part of our economy. They can do that by building housing solutions and they can build their balance sheet.

I have the support of my colleagues at Community Services, Energy, Mines and Resources, Health and Social Services, and the Premier's office to work with everybody we have within government to move ahead on private sector development. That is going to be extremely important. Energy, Mines and Resources and Community Services will do that good work that they're doing, but we really need to have different elements of the private sector giving us solutions as well.

I think that, when we talk about seniors, Vimy is going to be a key piece. We're getting there. We've spent a lot of time. It has been touched on in the Assembly. We haven't really had a chance to discuss it fully. Health and Social Services is at the table with Yukon Housing Corporation. We're just trying to make sure that we work with that passionate group of people to get a project that can be built and that has the proper supports that are in it and a really good plan for it to go into the future.

That is going to be a series. If you look at what the Vimy group defines, inevitably — if it's six or seven units, depending on what they want to build — it will be their choice, but whatever they build, we are again hopefully going to see 60 or 70 homes, townhouses, and condominiums now open. These are really dramatic effects on the housing market.

One of the other things we have done that we didn't talk about today is that we are really tracking the amount of building that is happening within our community. In 2020, we had a record number for building permit values. It was the most ever. We have surpassed that in the first three quarters of 2021. In just two years, we are seeing — and it's continuing on. The numbers coming out even for September were far above the national average when you take a look at the increases and what

we have for residential permits and builds. Whether you are driving through the neighbourhoods that you represent — the member opposite — or in my area or the Member for Porter Creek North's area, when you go through those areas, what you are seeing is a tremendous amount of densification in building happening right now. The Yukon Housing Corporation teams are tracking all of that, and we are seeing some significant buildout. I think that this is going to make a really dramatic impact on some of the pressures that we have.

The projects that we have been leading or partnering on start to get to completion. We are going to get folks off of our wait-lists. We are going to have a number of solutions for seniors, starting with Normandy. We think that this is going to make a big impact. Those folks are going to be leaving the units in which they currently live. That is also going to have a very positive ancillary effect. We are hoping to see what can happen at 5th and Rogers. That will make a significant impact. Whatever we do there and whoever does it, we want to make sure that they do it appropriately and fast. Those are part of the terms that we are thinking about.

Again, there are the latter phases of Whistle Bend. We have talked a bit here with the opposition. The Third Party has touched on Macaulay Lodge. We have looked at that, and the current structure is not something that we can use for emergency housing or other types of housing because some of the inside of that structure has been removed. It's getting ready for demolition, but we have had very good conversations with Highways and Public Works — from the Yukon Housing Corporation — about trying to fast-track what can be there next. I can tell you that, if I get the support of my colleagues, what I want to see there is the private sector building something that is appropriate for there and something that will conform to the neighbourhood and be supported by the neighbourhood. So, that is another spot.

We continue to look at other big locations here for private development. I think that those are some of the things, at least, that we are thinking about. Our board has its own ideas as well, and we think that the key to the solution for our challenges in rural Yukon is working alongside the folks who know those communities best, which are First Nations, municipalities, and some of the private sector leaders and entrepreneurs who call those communities their home.

Ms. Tredger: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I would also like to thank the officials for being here and for the really helpful briefing that they gave before. I really enjoyed that briefing and learned a lot.

I want to start out by talking about the northern housing fund, which I understand has been decreased by \$1.1 million to be moved for the rapid housing initiative. I think that is great that there is going to be money available for the rapid housing initiative. It makes sense to me that the costs were higher than expected, given everything that has been going on, but I am wondering about what that cut means because I understand that the northern housing fund in the past has been used for rent subsidies. So, I am wondering what is going to happen for rent subsidies this year instead.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: There is not an impact to our program; we still have \$1.4 million in our budget that we can use to help us offset and still be able to provide our program on our rent supplement.

Ms. Tredger: Just to confirm, even though there is the cut, is there enough to provide as many rent subsidies as were provided last year? Are you anticipating any changes to the program from last year?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I have just checked with officials. Of course, when we are talking about the categories around capital — and the other one around O&M — we have the stable O&M funding, and we don't see any impacts to the program that is being questioned today.

Ms. Tredger: That is really great to hear. I also understand that money that was originally allocated for unit conversions was cut, and what I understand happened is that those units may be demolished instead.

I am wondering what the timeline is for rebuilding those units that are going to be demolished instead of being converted. I was also wondering which units that funding applied to.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We touched on this earlier, and if I didn't, I apologize. Based on the increased costs that we realized around COVID, we reallocated some of the monies that we had for conversion over to help meet our capital cost demands on our new projects — thinking that was a good, prudent decision. But, looking to the future, where possible, there will be transitions with some of those units. I'm not specifically aware of anything that we have decided to demolish versus transition. I can look into that with officials, but it was really just about meeting the capital call for the needs of our new buildings.

Ms. Tredger: I may have misunderstood about the demolitions.

Which units were planned to be transitioned that aren't going to be transitioned this year?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: It will probably be best for us to reach to our team that deals with more of our construction and maintenance, and we can get back with a return.

To be fair to them, I don't know if they identified each individual unit that was going to be there. They probably have a priority list in their project management structure, but we will bring that back. That will be the one item for which we will have to come with a written return in answer to questions from the Third Party.

Ms. Tredger: I would appreciate that. I guess that it raises a bigger question for me, which is: At a time where we have all acknowledged that housing is an enormous need in the territory, why was funding cut in order to give funding to the rapid housing initiative, rather than just providing that funding from somewhere else? Why did we choose housing as the place to balance the budget?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: This is a decision that is made within our senior team. They are extremely professional. They understand housing. We were dealing with a number of things. We tend to go out and get individuals or different companies with the capacity to do the work. We have a number of

companies that we lean on. That is one thing that is really important to recognize.

Also, we had a project that is being built right now. I can tell you — I think most of us, with our own experiences — that it is extremely difficult to find a contractor, whether it's a contractor that is of significant size — one of the bigger companies that are here — or even one- or two-person operations. I'll dig into that.

I think that the decision was a good, prudent decision. Part of the challenge is that we needed money for our new project, and we also know that it is extremely hard to find capacity for the small projects. That's something that, from personal experience, I can tell the Assembly. I had a flood — a leak — in my home, and it was months and months just to try to find somebody — and finally now — who can just give me a quote. Some people are having claims on insurance because of different things that happened naturally this year. It is taking so long to find people.

So, the direction that I've given the corporation is to deploy money to where it is needed and to where we can get a quick return on it. That's what I'm aware of at this point. I certainly will go back and talk to our folks who lead some of that work.

But, again, we're not trying to leave any rock unturned when it comes to the work here. It's just important to share that with the Assembly.

Ms. Tredger: Thank you for that answer. So, what I understood is that there were two reasons: one was to provide the money for other projects, and the other was because of difficulty finding contractors, which certainly is a challenge. That said, I think I, and many other members of this House, would have been more than happy to vote for a budget that said we need additional money for housing so we don't have to cut it from other programs, and that decision does concern me.

I will move on from there. I want to follow up a little bit on the question about empty units at Yukon Housing Corporation that my colleague asked about. So, I didn't quite understand the answer. It wasn't clear whether those units are empty because they are waiting for renovations or if they are being held in reserve for emergency housing. I wonder if the member opposite can clarify.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just for clarification, that's my understanding. It's just within the current situation when it comes to capacity. We will go back and talk to our lead when it comes to this and make sure. I think it was really what the different metrics that were used to make that decision. I think that's fair.

When we speak about our 20 units, right now, they are units that have to be renovated. Those 20 units have to be renovated. Our plan was to fix them. In some cases, I think they are all at a different level of disrepair. What we have shared — and we certainly shared it in our meeting just this last week with the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition — is that, if we have to, we may move folks in there in the interim. We may not have time to get the renovations done to the level that we want, but it might be a more appropriate location for folks this winter versus other options. Right now, we are looking to renovate, but in the interim, we are keeping a close eye on those 20 units,

which normally would not meet the standard of what we would provide a client, but we may have to use those, based on the pressures that we're seeing in the housing market at this point.

Ms. Tredger: How long have those units been offline? I'm wondering what the barrier is to getting them renovated so that they can be back at the typical standard.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Same scenario — it is challenging to find the capacity to do the renovations. In some cases, we have tenants who leave and they leave things behind, and we have to follow particular protocols when it comes to that. That sometimes hinders how fast we can get in and do our renovations.

We are moving right away to move folks into these units, and the individuals who are moving into the units might have some disruption because we may have to do some of the maintenance work while we have folks living in there. But, really, we think that, under the current circumstances, this is the right decision. We are trying to move those units as quickly as possible to get folks into more appropriate housing, compared to where they are, in some cases, now.

Ms. Tredger: I understand that finding contractors is part of the challenge, and I really do appreciate that it is a challenge. It is not one that I can imagine going away any time soon, and I am wondering what steps Yukon Housing is taking to make sure that they do have contractors available or whether they are considering having their own staff who can do those renovations.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that finding proper solutions to housing is key, but I also think that having a thriving private sector is key. Ensuring that we use private sector expertise when appropriate to do this work is something that we will have to look at.

Looking at labour challenges is not just a conversation that is going to happen at the Yukon Housing Corporation board. Yes, they have to think about that, but it's also part of what we think about all the time at Economic Development and it is something that is thought about at the Department of Education — things that we know include getting ahead in our planning and being able to have contractual relationships based on tendering processes. These are all things that can help us to have capacity in place when needed. I think it's a bit different. There always seems to be competitive interest in our bigger projects compared to some of the smaller things that we're doing. What I am seeing across the construction field is that so many folks are building new. That is where a lot of our talent has gone versus going into some of the other work.

I know that we have a great team at the Yukon Housing Corporation who have a lot of expertise. I think that you have identified a great point. How do we think about one, two, or three years out for capacity? I think that this is something that we will continue to grapple with. You are right that it's not something that is going away, but it is difficult. We are in a housing boom, and the more folks that we bring here continues to potentially exacerbate the challenge. It's a complex issue, but we are going to look to having organizations that we work with that can help us meet the needs and goals and help us with the

renovations and transitions that we want to see and the units that we currently have in our portfolio.

Ms. Tredger: Thank you for that answer, and I do want to provide a few follow-up comments on it. I certainly also want a thriving private sector. I do not think that the contractors are in danger of going out of business if we start having public people who can do the repairs. As we said, it is very difficult to find a contractor right now. I would encourage Yukon Housing Corporation to really consider options there so that we don't have 20 units sitting, waiting for repairs, when we also have a wait-list of over 400 people.

With that, I will move on. I want to talk about the mixed-use housing at 4th and Jeckell as well and follow up a little bit on what my colleague asked. I am really excited that these 47 units are coming online. That is fantastic.

What kind of extra capacity is Yukon Housing Corporation going to have to support those 47 extra units?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We have a stability worker who will work with the clients. Part of what we need to do is — because it is mixed-use housing — find out the needs of the clients, so that will be partially what we do. We do have a capacity that's identified to support and to identify the needs and then help us coordinate the extra services from the many service providers we see here in Whitehorse.

So, that is our plan. Again, we have to wait to see who is on our wait-list, who has priority, and then who makes up the tenant mix within the new building.

Ms. Tredger: The stability worker who was mentioned for that unit — is that a new position that has been created to support the 4th and Jeckell project?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The current stability worker and support worker — we have a transfer payment agreement with Safe at Home, and that is where the individual works. As we move on, if we are seeing the need for greater capacity or more folks to do that type of work, then we will be making those decisions within our staffing model.

Ms. Tredger: I just want to express some concern about the “wait and see” approach to see if more support is needed. We have 47 units coming on. I think that, previously this afternoon, the member opposite said that it could be up to in the neighbourhood of 75 new people in housing.

Is there any scenario where the minister can imagine that there is not more support needed for this unit?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I find — it's kind of interesting. There's like a tone that's just sort of aggressive here today.

Again, we're looking to the needs. We don't know who is going to live there. We work with Safe at Home, which has been a great, great partner. We could take a lot of advice from the Safe at Home folks as well as from the Anti-Poverty Coalition. Like the member opposite, I spent a portion of my professional career working with folks who are vulnerable and at risk, whether that be youth or seniors. Again, people need very unique services sometimes. What we're saying is that, right now, we think that our relationship with Safe at Home is filling our need. As we get closer to filling those particular units, we will continue to work with the experts in the field, like Safe at Home, and at that time, if we need to increase our

capacity — or maybe Safe at Home wants to increase their capacity — I'm not sure. I'm just saying that, at this point, we don't have all the information.

The member opposite is stating that we should hire somebody right now. The building is still not completed. We have the important work of juggling how we use our resources. That's why we are here today — to talk about the supplementary budget. I don't think that it's prudent to hire somebody today to support the 47 units that are not finished being built yet.

Ms. Tredger: I appreciate that the member opposite does not like my tone and finds it aggressive. That is not actually something that I've heard him say to any other member of this House, and I don't know if there is something particularly about me that he finds aggressive or if that's just something he finds when he gets asked questions.

But I will move on from that to the housing stability worker in general and leave the question about the future capacity aside.

I understand that there is funding for Safe at Home to provide a housing stability worker. Could the member opposite tell us what their caseload is like and if there is a wait-list to access that worker?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I was just made aware that the housing stability position was just hired by Safe at Home. In our next engagement with Safe at Home, I can find out what the caseload is, but that is somebody who has just been hired. I think it is important, as well, to note that we have another individual who works with our seniors who are looking for housing. I will just let the House know that there are different, of course, needs and supports that folks need, depending on where they are at within the housing continuum.

There are a lot of organizations doing really good work that have housing navigators, so that individual who is looking at housing stability is really about trying to make sure that folks, even if they are vulnerable or having challenges, continue to keep those homes and then work with the other navigators. Again, specific to this question, I don't have the caseload numbers from Safe at Home, but we do know that the position was newly filled.

Ms. Tredger: I thank the minister for that answer. It is exciting to hear that there is a new position coming online for that.

Changing tack slightly, when calculating what users of Yukon Housing pay for their housing, is CERB income from last year being considered to calculate what users pay?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The Canadian emergency response benefit provided financial support to employed and self-employed Canadians who were directly affected by COVID — as the member opposite said, of course, the acronym being “CERB”. Our goal is that the funding provided through this program should only benefit recipients and should never result in a net financial disadvantage. Yukon Housing Corporation will adjust rent calculations for clients who may be affected negatively to ensure that their rent does not increase as a result of having received the Canadian emergency response benefit. The quick answer is no, Madam Chair.

Ms. Tredger: That is great to hear. I have a bigger question. I have written a number of letters over the summer to the minister about clients of Yukon Housing who were struggling with communication, struggling with follow-up, struggling to understand what was being expected of them, and struggling to get support in their housing. I do want to say that those concerns were addressed very quickly after I wrote to the minister, and I really do appreciate that.

I do feel, however, that people shouldn't have to come to an opposition MLA to have their concerns addressed, and I wonder if there are systemic changes — or a systemic look at how Yukon Housing clients are being supported and how the communication is working. I will leave that there.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that it is a very relevant topic — how we interact with our clients — always remembering that no matter who is walking through the door, we have an obligation to serve those individuals. I think that the folks have really challenging jobs in that they understand the pressures. The conversations that happen with our team at Yukon Housing Corporation, especially those on the front line, are always, especially in the current circumstances, really, really difficult conversations. Individuals are constantly making difficult decisions based on where we are at.

I think that the member opposite did a great job on representing the needs of constituents. I think that we can always do better. It's not just political rhetoric. In this case, no matter what government department it is, we have to understand that no matter who is across the table from you, no matter what area of life they are coming from, and no matter what their challenges are, we have to be extremely respectful to folks. Those are discussions that I have had directly with the president. I have full confidence that, if there are changes in mindset or culture that need to occur, they will occur under her leadership. I think that there are always opportunities for us to do better — to make sure that folks feel respected when we are working with them — that they are getting the right supports. I also, to the Assembly, ask for the understanding that many of the folks who work on our team get put into very challenging discussions and are under a lot of pressure to deliver. It can be a pretty difficult job, but we always have to carry ourselves — right from my role and the senior team — with extreme professionalism, always understanding that our role is to serve our clients, who are Yukoners.

Ms. Tredger: I would like to briefly ask about how the SCAN legislation has affected Yukon Housing Corporation. I am wondering how many times in the past — I guess whatever number of years are available — have there been evictions from Yukon Housing Corporation through the SCAN process. I am also curious about how many times that process has been started and not led to an eviction.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Madam Chair, SCAN is a complaint-based process regarding the illegal use of property. SCAN must have a complaint before starting an investigation. The Yukon Housing Corporation is the landlord in all SCAN investigations involving the Yukon Housing Corporation properties. I would say that SCAN and Yukon Housing Corporation are partnering agencies at times, and when lawful and appropriate, the SCAN

unit and Yukon Housing Corporation share information and evidence to address the illegal use of a property. Action can be separated or coordinated and occur under the SCAN act and the RLTA.

We can go back to find — I'll take a look here at some of our information. From 2019 to 2020, there were 39 Housing Corporation properties related to SCAN complaints. Again, of the 39 investigations — Yukon Housing and SCAN have coordinated on the majority of the 39 complaints, but not all the complaints were from the Yukon Housing Corporation.

As a rule, the SCAN unit works to address the illegal use of property collaboratively with the landlord to avoid taking the landlord to court. So, concerning the 39 properties, 17 warnings were provided to tenants by SCAN to cease illegal activity. Then SCAN assisted in one landlord eviction — so one eviction that we had under the SCAN act for drug trafficking activity. In SCAN terminology, we had, I guess you would call it 18 operational closures of the 39 properties. We saw one tenant removed for drug trafficking through investigation.

Ms. Tredger: Thank you. That was very helpful. I wonder: Does Yukon Housing have any policies about when someone is evicted? What happens next? Do they go back on the wait-list? Are they not allowed to be on the wait-list again? Do they have to reapply? Do you try to find other housing for them? Or does Yukon Housing try to find other housing for them?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Individuals who are evicted through this type of process can go back on our wait-list. The only thing is that they need to pay arrears. Those have to be remedied before they move on.

In a case like this, if we have had someone who has been partaking in illegal activity — if they are in our housing, in one of our units — I will dig in to see if there is some sort of a transition piece, but at this point, if they have been evicted, normally they can come back on the list. At that point, does the Yukon Housing Corporation continue to provide some transition services? I don't think that has been our practice, but we can look at other organizations out there that we can refer folks to. They can maybe help them find another opportunity within the housing portfolio in that community.

Ms. Tredger: That was a very helpful answer.

I would like to follow up on my colleague's questions about the community land trust. I am dying to know more, but I do understand it is mostly with EMR right now. I do wonder if the minister knows: When suitable land is identified, what will the arrangement be? Will it be leased to the land trust? Will it be sold or donated?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Madam Chair, I think that when Energy, Mines and Resources is back, hopefully there will be an opportunity then to discuss it. My sense is that they are looking for a suitable piece of land and the transaction would be similar to Habitat for Humanity. That is my understanding.

They are working with a group to find a suitable piece of land. In the past, with Habitat for Humanity, we have transferred that land to them. I think it was done for a dollar. I think that is the concept being used here — get them an

appropriate piece of land at a very appropriate price, which could be potentially a dollar.

Ms. Tredger: I just want to say again that I am really excited about this project. I wonder if there are plans for any other public housing initiatives like land trusts, like housing co-ops, that this government is looking at beyond this one land trust.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We continue to monitor the housing initiatives fund. That seems to be the one place where we're seeing real innovation and some creative ideas, so we will continue to look at that. I think that we are seeing different First Nation governments or development corporations come up with models that are unique and we are supporting those. That could be anything from tiny home models that are being used across the Yukon and some of the things that we have seen that we have supported here in the downtown core as well.

There are conversations that are happening all the time — to be open to the member opposite — not so much focused on land, but really trying to figure out more cost-effective ways to build, whether that is more efficient manufacturing or the re-use of materials and units that are out there. We have seen, at least in one case, some entrepreneurship from one of the local First Nation companies that are now doing a lot of work in Whistle Bend as well as in Carcross, and I think that is really about more sort of mass manufacturing.

There are a lot of different things that we are looking at. It has been a discussion that has kind of had stops and starts with the university around continuing to do research in the field. I do think that there are a lot of different ideas coming, but this is the only one I am aware of when it comes to land. We are going to continue to have discussions with folks like Habitat for Humanity and we're having good dialogue and continuing to support them to build their projects. That is what I am aware of at this point.

Ms. Tredger: Madam Chair, I would like to switch gears now to the rural home ownership loan program.

On the website for the rural home ownership loan program, it says you are eligible if: "You're building or purchasing a new home for your primary residence in the Yukon but outside Whitehorse." Then there are other criteria that don't relate to where that house is. I have been hearing from people in the Hamlet of Mount Lorne who are being told that they are not eligible for this program.

Can the minister clarify who is eligible for this program based on where they live?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We are aware of a situation where one or more individuals who live in the hamlet were told that this program did not apply to them. That is not the case. We have gone back and believe that the situation has been rectified. Please, if folks are reaching out, let them know that anywhere outside of Whitehorse, including that hamlet, they can apply. If anybody needs support or they are still having challenges with those discussions within our organization, please let us know how we can help to make sure that those folks can apply for the rural mortgage program.

Ms. Tredger: I appreciate the member opposite sharing that he is working to fix this problem. For the people who have

contacted me — I have heard stories of following up multiple times with the people it says to contact on the website and not getting replies or getting conflicting information. The approach that I understand they should take is to suggest that they try one more time to follow up with the contact on the website, and if that doesn't work, I would support them in contacting the minister. Can he confirm that this is the approach that they should take?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes. Our understanding is not that we are working at it, but that it has actually been solved. We have some of our senior folks here. We will make sure that, if there is a problem with the contact number — absolutely, if the individual wants to contact me directly, it's ranj.pillai@yukon.ca. Please send me an e-mail and I will link folks up with the right people to make sure that we can get them in the process of accessing this mortgage, especially if folks have a spot and want to build. We want to be able to support them to build as quickly as possible.

Ms. Tredger: Thank you, I appreciate that. One suggestion that I have that I would like to provide is that this information be shared with people in Mount Lorne and other places that might be affected who may not have reached out to us but may have been turned away and assumed that it was the final answer. Some advertising or working through community associations might be really helpful.

There was some discussion earlier about whether that program would be expanded to include people in Whitehorse during a question and answer asked by my colleague. I just want to second my support for having a program like that available in Whitehorse. There are lots of partnerships happening with the government and industry. That is fantastic, but I also think that individuals who are trying to build homes are part of the solution and should be supported to do that.

With that, I would like to move on to some of the *Our Clean Future* commitments. One of the commitments that is under the purview of the Yukon Housing Corporation is to continue to work with Yukon First Nations to retrofit First Nations housing to be more energy efficient. Could the minister give us an update on that work?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just harkening back to the last question, we do have some marketing that's out right now or some advertising — that is not to say that we can't do more. So, we have social media advertising that's happening right now around that program as well as some newspaper ads. We also ensure that we look at getting it out to the hamlets and to some of the local representatives as well in whatever we figure is the best and most effective way to do that.

I appreciate the comments around looking at some strategic needs inside of Whitehorse. I think the member opposite is absolutely correct that we need to be able to support individuals who are here and they're a major part of this, especially individuals who can go and build out and even add suites or garden suites — any of those extras — when they build are all going to be very important.

Based on our work around climate change, right now, we have six First Nations that we're working with. The total amount approved since 2019-20 is \$2,065,500. Our amount

distributed to date is \$1,308,150. The six nations that are currently working with us and are using these programs are Kluane First Nation, Selkirk First Nation, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun.

Ms. Tredger: It's very exciting to hear that this work is underway.

Another commitment that's in *Our Clean Future* is to continue to retrofit Government of Yukon community housing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in each building by 30 percent. Could we have an update on that commitment?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Based on our project management plan and based on the timeline we have given, we are on track for our retrofit work, based on the current assets that we hold.

Ms. Tredger: We are about one of 10 years into the 2030 commitment. Does that mean about 10 percent of the buildings have had a 30-percent reduction in emissions?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Part of our carbon tax tracking for 2019-20 — we are forecasting, for next year of our carbon tax tracking, that we will be saving \$65,000. I can try to get a percentage number based on our stock. We have tried to trend out over those 10 years and the amount of work we have had that we see our numbers coming in. That would make sense, those 10 points, but let me go back to clarify exactly where we are based on our plan for the next 10 years.

Ms. Tredger: Thank you, I would appreciate that. I find that, in trying to get a number of how many buildings we are looking at or what percentage of those buildings have been reduced and by how much, it would be helpful to get a sense of where we are at in that process. I think it is really important in making sure we meet the targets and that we allocate enough resources to make sure we can meet those targets.

I would like to talk a little bit more about the rental market in the Yukon. I don't know if the minister has read the letter to the editor that was published in, I believe, the *Yukon News* today about a family who is leaving the Yukon because, as they put it, "Housing is the reason, landlords are the cause." They talked about the incredible imbalance of power there is between tenants and landlords and how that has led to them accepting decisions that should never have happened because they felt powerless to fight them. They talked about trying to work through the RTO to fight decisions and getting lost in the bureaucracy and getting lost in fees. It really just speaks to how helpless tenants can be when someone who controls their housing has the ability to make decisions unilaterally and in which they have very limited ability to fight.

Can the minister talk about what work is being done to balance that power so that tenants do have a voice and do have some power to fight for their housing — to fight for that really fundamental need, which is housing — so they are not subject to the whims of the market and the whims of someone who is running a business?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will provide a little bit of flexibility in the dialogue today. I don't think it pertains directly to anything in the supplementary budget, but I think it is probably a philosophical difference too, but I did take a look at the letter today. I don't want anybody who wants to make Yukon their

home and wants to build a future here and contribute to our community to have to leave. I think that we have been very open at the Yukon Housing Corporation that, yes, there is a challenge. Multiple things have led to the challenge. I am not sitting here playing political football. I am just saying that there are a lot of things and we all know that. Lots of different factors contributed to that. That is why, at our housing summit, we really put the obligation for the solution to this out to everybody. There are a number of people who work inside the Yukon government. Whatever their role is, in many cases, they have a very significant part in rectifying the challenges we have — whether they are working in lands or infrastructure or Land Titles in the Justice department — you name it. We have 11 self-governing First Nations that all have the ability to have lands acts in place. Work that has been done in previous mandates of government and have continued on has led to that opportunity for all of those nations, if they make it a priority, to be able to provide opportunities for their citizens to be on those lands. We have municipalities that are all coming together in different places around their official community plans, which is key. Those are just some of the factors that are coming into play.

When I read that letter, I don't think to myself that Yukon Housing Corporation let these folks down. I am not saying that this is what the member opposite is saying. Since I'm being asked that today in this debate, I believe that we never want to see that happen. I know that the member opposite knows very well that the legislation doesn't fall under the Yukon Housing Corporation. I think that there has been some lively debate about it and there will continue to be lively debate about it. We hear that there are lots of conversations that are going to be in front of the House in the very near future on that topic.

Again, am I concerned? I'm always concerned. I don't want to see people leaving. I think that it's difficult in this country right now. No matter what city you go to, you are going to find challenges finding housing and you are going to see housing prices rise.

I don't think the House needs to hear my opinion on that piece of legislation. I think that the Minister of Community Services will probably respond to that, but our goal is to not see letters like that in the newspaper. The mandate of the Housing Corporation has always been around affordable housing as well as staff housing. But again, we have a larger scope right now, and we are just looking at trying to make sure that we push housing solutions in every area that we possibly can.

I am sorry if I didn't explicitly answer your question, but I'm just giving you a view from the other side of the aisle.

Ms. Tredger: I do know that the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* does fall under Community Services and not Yukon Housing Corporation, but I cannot imagine that what is happening in rental housing in the market versus what is happening to affordable housing versus what is happening at the residential tenancies office and what's happening at Yukon Housing Corporation do not all — they are connected. They are absolutely connected and they absolutely affect each other.

So, I am interested in knowing the Minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation's opinion on this because it affects

our affordable housing and it affects who ends up on the wait-list at Yukon Housing Corporation. To try to pretend that it is a piece of legislation that doesn't affect his portfolio is — it's all connected and we can't deal with one piece of this problem, which is housing, without also looking at the context in which housing happens.

But with that, I don't have any further questions. I will end there for the day.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just to comment and a thank you — and then we'll wrap up.

I appreciate that. I'm not saying that this is not something that affects Yukon Housing Corporation. I will leave it with this: I think that all of the decisions being made around housing directly affect the challenges that we have in housing — the decisions that will be made over the short run, the decisions that we are making today. I think that they all have consequences. When I come to the Assembly, that is something that I always try to share. All of our decisions can have consequences. Sometimes when we try to make one decision on policy, sometimes there are other effects that you can't anticipate.

I think I'll leave it at that.

I want to thank President Mary Cameron for coming in today. She has been working extremely, extremely hard on behalf of Yukoners. Everything that we have been asking, Mary has taken on. Our financial picture has been tight and it has been good and we have been running our numbers well, and that is because Marcel Holder Robinson has been doing a phenomenal job as well. Thank you both for being here today, and I thank the Assembly for letting us talk about what is probably one of the most important issues that we see.

Madam Chair, seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Porter Creek South that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

May the House have a report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the House do now adjourn.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Acting Government House Leader that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to

Speaker: This House now stands adjourned to 1:00 p.m. Monday.

The House adjourned at 5:29 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled November 4, 2021:

35-1-28

Zoom in On Children's Rights: 2020/2021 Annual Report — Yukon Child & Youth Advocate Office (Speaker Harper)

The following document was filed November 4, 2021:

35-1-14

School staffing in Watson Lake, letter re (dated August 30, 2021) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Patti McLeod, Member for Watson Lake (McLean)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 28

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, November 8, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier Government House Leader* Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
Hon. Nils Clarke	Riverdale North	Minister of Highways and Public Works; Environment
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Government House Leader* Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Minister of Economic Development; Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Jeanie McLean	Mountainview	Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

Currie Dixon	Leader of the Official Opposition Copperbelt North	Scott Kent	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Yvonne Clarke	Porter Creek Centre	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Emily Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Annie Blake	Vuntut Gwitchin

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

*Government House Leader: Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee to November 4, 2021; Hon. John Streicker from November 5, 2021

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, November 8, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.
 We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes which have been made to the Order Paper. The following motion has not been placed on the Notice Paper as the motion is out of order: Motion No. 187, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge.

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will proceed at this time with the Order Paper.

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. McLean: I ask my colleagues to help me welcome some important guests here today for our tribute on National Indigenous Veterans Day.

First, I will start with Josephine Holloway, niece to Ralph Edward Good, who was a pilot officer in the Air Force. Thank you so much for coming today. Joe Mewett, president of the Whitehorse Legion Branch 254; Red Grossinger, past president, Whitehorse Legion Branch 254; Major Theriau, detachment commander, Joint Task Force North; Captain Rector, detachment liaison officer for the Joint Task Force North; and Peter Zwikirsch, Canadian Ranger, Whitehorse Patrol.

Thank you so much for coming today for the tribute.

I would also like to welcome my husband back to the Legislative Assembly — Rick McLean. Thank you all for being here today.

Applause

Ms. White: Today I invite my colleagues to join me in welcoming two important people here today in the gallery. In 2019, she was elected to represent Nunavut, and with that, she told indigenous people that they belonged in places where decisions were made. She has changed the face of Canadian politics, and although she chose not to run in this last election, we have not seen the last of Mumilaaq Qaqqaq. Thank you for being here.

As we say, we are a product of our families, and today joining Mumilaaq is her mother Pia. So, Pia is a retired educator — retired teacher — who spent her entire career in the Arctic, and Mumilaaq has said that it's not a surprise that she turned out the way she did, and her brother is also on the hamlet council.

So, thank you, Pia, for being such an influence and for being here today with us.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am wondering if we can also welcome Mr. Dave Brekke, who is a long-time advocate around voting systems here in the territory — if we could welcome him, please.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of National Indigenous Veterans Day

Hon. Ms. McLean: I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to National Indigenous Veterans Day. More than 500 indigenous soldiers died on our behalf, while serving on land, sea, and in air.

It has been 20 years since a major monument commemorating indigenous veterans was unveiled in Ottawa in 2001. At the time of this unveiling, indigenous veterans were still being denied equal benefits, and the concept of reconciliation was only starting to enter into conversations. It would be another two years, in 2003, before the Government of Canada extended full veteran's benefits to honour and recognize the dedication and sacrifice of indigenous soldiers.

National Indigenous Veterans Day is meant to shine light on the incredible valour and contributions of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples who served in uniform and to better understand their history, including the unequal reception and discrimination that many experienced after returning home.

Mr. Speaker, it is tragic that, while indigenous soldiers were fighting for freedom in other regions of the world, their own freedoms at home were being violated by colonization. Imagine putting your life at risk for others' freedom while your own family suffered terribly in residential school systems. Now, as we continue to uncover mass gravesites of children connected to residential schools, the sacrifices made by indigenous soldiers should be even more front of mind for all Canadians.

One of the Yukon's most famous indigenous soldiers who survived the perils of World War II was veteran Chief Elijah Smith. Chief Smith was fuelled by the suffering that he saw upon returning to Canada. He was inspired to lead in the creation of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*, an enormous contribution to our country.

National Indigenous Veterans Day is an opportunity to salute indigenous veterans who fully understand Canada's legacy of abuse and decide how we, as Canadians, will use the freedom that we were gifted at the expense of so many indigenous people. I hope we are able to truly reflect on this as we move forward on the path toward reconciliation.

In closing, I want to acknowledge all of the incredible artisans working throughout our territory and nationally to create lovingly beaded poppies. I am wearing a poppy created by my niece, Brenda Lee Asp. In her own words, it is created to honour the sacrifices that our families have made to help fight for the freedom of this country.

It is made with glass beads, porcupine quills, and a single centre bead made of tourmaline, a protection stone to acknowledge the sorrow and grief that goes with war.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to National Indigenous Veterans Day, a day observed annually on November 8 in Canada. This special day recognizes the significant contributions of indigenous veterans, past and present. During the great conflicts of the 20th century, indigenous people voluntarily enlisted at a higher rate than other Canadians. This enthusiasm is well documented for First Nation people. Today, approximately 2,300 regular force and primary reserve members have identified themselves as indigenous, representing 2.5 percent of the total population of the military.

Among the other reserve forces, indigenous peoples occupy an important place among the 5,000 Canadian Rangers. I would say that here in the Yukon, at least 50 percent or more are indigenous, and across the other territories, it is probably even higher. The role of the Rangers is so important to protecting Canada's sovereignty in the north. Thousands of indigenous people have served over the years, voluntarily enlisting in the Canadian military from all regions of the country, and they have been on the front lines. They have made contributions to war charities and have volunteered labour in wartime industries.

I want to highlight something that shows just how important our First Nation veterans are to Canada. In 2014, Canada's top soldier, the Chief of the Defence Staff, General Thomas J. Lawson, headed to his regular 11:00 a.m. briefing, a briefing where he would hear of national issues, like there has been a terrorist attack or there is need for humanitarian aid. His staff said, "Sit down. Alex Van Bibber has died, sir. He's a Yukon legend." At 98, Van Bibber was one of Yukon's last surviving aboriginal veterans from the Second World War. They then began to spend the complete briefing, one hour long, telling of Alex's life. Over 8,000 people came to his funeral in the tiny community of Champagne, many military dignitaries among them. This, Mr. Speaker, is a testament to how valuable our First Nation veterans are to our great country of Canada. They came together for our country, and we come together in recognition of their contributions.

So, we thank all indigenous veterans for their services, for their contributions, and for their efforts and sacrifices for us throughout our history and especially today. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to serve among many of them. Lest we forget.

Applause

Ms. Blake: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to National Indigenous Veterans Day. We all honour all indigenous Canadians who have served, and continue to serve, Canada both at home and abroad.

Indigenous Canadians have stood tall for their values since the beginning of time. Across nations, indigenous people are guided by ideas of community and generosity. In the first, second, and Korean wars, over 12,000 indigenous people

volunteered to serve. I use the word "volunteered" because indigenous people weren't actually eligible for conscription. During these wars, indigenous soldiers who enrolled lost their status but were still not considered Canadian citizens.

The Yukon had many First Nation citizens who served in different wars. In the Second World War, Chief Peter Moses and the community of Old Crow raised money to send to Europe to support children who lost parents and for other relief programs. Chief Elijah Smith, who helped launch *Together Today for our Children Tomorrow*, as well as Alex Van Bibber, who was a Champagne and Aishihik citizen, both served in the Second World War. Abroad, these veterans witnessed unimaginable violence and faced impossible choices on the front lines. Many of these veterans were young, and many did not return. Yet, after so much trauma abroad, indigenous veterans came back home and found themselves with little to no support. The Canadian government failed people like Chief Smith and other indigenous veterans. Indigenous veterans were no longer able to access programs and services provided by the federal government on their reserves. At the same time that they were unable to access services on reserves, indigenous veterans were not able to access the same services provided to other returning veterans because they were Indians.

So, as we celebrate National Indigenous Veterans Day, it is important to remember that it wasn't until 50 years after the Second World War that indigenous peoples were allowed to lay remembrance wreaths at the National War Memorial. They weren't allowed to remember and honour their friends and colleagues like other veterans were able to do.

Every day we remember the generosity of spirit and community that indigenous veterans had and continue to have. Today we thank and remember all indigenous people and their families who have given their kindness, dedication, and lives to the Canadian Armed Forces and to their fellow Canadians. Lest we forget.

Applause

In recognition of veterans' mental health services

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to recognize that we are entering the week of Remembrance Day. This is a time to remember those who have sacrificed for our country and those who continue to serve.

For many of us, it is hard to imagine what our Canadian veterans and soldiers have been through; however, it is easy to understand how their duties and experiences can affect one's mental health. We must recognize that many veterans and soldiers have long-term effects from their experiences, including possibly post-traumatic stress disorder, or what is known as PTSD. We need to be supportive in every way, patient, kind, and caring toward each other because we never know who might be living with the effects of PTSD or other mental wellness issues.

If you or someone you know is struggling, do not feel alone. Mental illness and mental wellness issues can affect anyone. It is perfectly normal to feel angry, anxious, lonely, sad, or worried, but do not deny yourself access to the care that you might need. Mental health is a huge part of our overall

health and wellness and should be a priority for everyone. It is okay to reach out for help no matter where you are, your age, your history, or what you are going through. You don't have to go through it alone.

In addition to many other services, our team at Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services provides services for people living with all kinds of issues, including severe and persistent mental illnesses like post-traumatic stress disorder. For many, these more targeted wraparound supports are the key to helping them manage their trauma. Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services also provides services to those caring for and supporting people with severe mental illness. Yukoners can also access services through the Canadian Mental Health Association, Yukon Division and All Genders Yukon. Collectively, Mr. Speaker, these services provide a light through the dark with their counselling services and support groups.

This week, we should all take the time to think about what veterans and those who are currently serving have lived through and to take the opportunity to thank them for their sacrifice, their bravery, and the example that they set for us all.

This is a chance to honour our Yukon veterans and our First Nation veterans and those who continue to serve. Our freedoms were earned by each and every one of you. Thank you for your service and sacrifices.

Applause

In recognition of Wounded Warriors Canada

Mr. Istchenko: I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition and the Third Party to recognize the importance of national support for our veterans in the area of mental health and wellness.

Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, our little community of Haines Junction was lucky to have a veteran, Paul Nichols, come talk to us Rangers and Junior Rangers about why he rode across Canada in 2015 to raise awareness for PTSD mental health issues — just some of the issues that veterans face when returning to civilian life.

He mentioned that most of us, many, still have the vision that our veterans are 90-year-old men who once stormed the beaches on D-Day. Actually, Mr. Speaker, the young lady working behind the counter in a convenience store has three tours as a combat nurse in Afghanistan. The young man doing maintenance on a fence survived a roadside bomb on his second tour in Afghanistan.

They live among us today but may struggle with the transition from soldier to civilian when they return home. They left a military family; they leave a brotherhood, sisterhood, and sometimes struggle to find their place back home. That's what a contemporary veteran is today.

Whether serving domestically or abroad, at some point during our service, many of us have experienced a traumatic event that changed our view of the world and changed ourselves. Depending on a range of factors, some people's reactions may last for just a short period of time while others may experience more lasting effects. Why some people are affected more than others — there is no simple answer.

In Canada, it's estimated that up to 10 percent of the veterans, including war service veterans and peacekeeping forces, will go on to experience a chronic condition known as post-traumatic stress disorder while others may experience at least some of the symptoms associated with this condition.

Today, I want to tribute, thank, and highlight organizations that help soldiers with mental health issues in transitioning back into the community: Wounded Warriors Canada is a national mental health service provider utilizing clinical best practices and evidence-based care to create an environment of compassion, resilience, and hope for Canada's veterans, first responders, and their families; Veterans Affairs Canada's mental health and wellness supports, online resources, special events, and apps all focus on improving well-being for releasing and former members of the Canadian Armed Forces or the RCMP, family members, and caregivers; and the Royal Canadian Legion understands the toll that serving our country can take on individuals and offer assistance in helping veterans to access help and supports available through the service officer of the Legion Service Bureau Network, and they will help veterans understand what supports are available, help to access benefits and services through Veterans Affairs Canada, refer veterans for mental health services, and provide information on community-based supports.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Nichols, on his visit to Haines Junction speaking of the transition back to civilian life — he and his wife run a successful horse clinic in BC where they bring veterans in and people with mental health issues — said that he knows that Canadian people love their troops. He said that he knows that we love our veterans; it's just that sometimes we forget who they are. If they get good support from community in the difficult time of transition, our troops will do really, really well moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, time doesn't heal all wounds. It is imperative that all governments, including ours, help to support our veterans in their time of need and that we support those organizations that help, day to day — listening to Yukoners, lending an ear, and lending a hand to help our veterans every day.

I would be remiss, because we have members from the legion here and service members here, if I didn't thank them.

Thank you, and lest we forget.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Cathers: I have for tabling today an e-mail dated November 8, 2021 to Hidden Valley school parents regarding their meeting tomorrow.

Ms. White: I have for tabling today two letters. One is dated today, November 8, directed to the Minister of Health and Social Services, asking to make nasal Naloxone accessible to all Yukoners. It is signed by Grand Chief Peter Johnston and eight NGOs in the territory. I also have for tabling a letter dated

November 7 from members of the public, asking for rapid tests to be available in school settings.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?
Are there any petitions to be presented?
Are there any bills to be introduced?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Kent: I rise to give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to implement new rapid-testing protocols for schools that will allow staff and students to safely continue with in-person learning as much as possible while identifying and limiting the spread of COVID-19.

Mr. Cathers: I rise today to give notice of the following motion:

THAT it is the opinion of this House that the agenda for the Yukon government's November 9, 2021 meeting for Hidden Valley school parents should be changed to allow parents to actually ask questions instead of being stuck listening to prepared remarks in a one-sided exchange.

Ms. White: I rise to give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support rural Yukon by urgently recruiting full-time mental health counsellors to meet the needs of each Yukon community.

Ms. Blake: I rise to give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to implement the use of rapid antigen tests for COVID screening for all Yukon students.

I also give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to reinstate the position of physician recruitment officer and expand the role to include the recruitment of health care professionals where shortages exist.

I also give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to make available the Shingrix vaccine for all Yukon seniors, free of charge.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Draft Dawson regional land use plan

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise to share with the Assembly and all Yukoners that we have had a chance to review and comment on the draft Dawson regional land use plan. The Dawson Regional Planning Commission has been conducting a thorough public engagement, and I want to thank all those who took the time to get involved and provide feedback.

The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the government want to congratulate the Dawson Regional Planning Commission with

the support of the Yukon Land Use Planning Council for their hard work in developing this draft plan. We can see the efforts being made to achieve a balance between many different interests through creative and collaborative means. We know that this is a special place for Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in as well as many other First Nations that have been, and will continue to be, on this land for generations.

Centring these values within the plan is highly important for the long-term sustainability of this region. I am happy to see the plan considering broader themes from an economic, ecological, and social perspective and embodying different kinds of land use to reflect the diverse needs in the area.

Some highlights include: a well-rounded approach, acknowledging major values and issues that exist in the region; innovative ideas used to deal with complex issues; consideration of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people in the context of land use; clarity on individual values being considered in each land management unit; and a creative communication style that provided stories about what the area means for people.

The opportunity to provide feedback is an integral part of the planning process and allows us to reflect on whether the direction of this plan is representative of what Yukoners envision for the future.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that our opportunity to provide clear, evidence-based feedback is a serious responsibility. While we believe that the draft plan is a good start, we must also be clear about ways we think the plan can, and should, be improved. We want to see more clarity and intent around the land management units. There are many specifics around this issue, but ultimately it is about providing certainty, upholding conservation values, preservation of the Fortymile caribou herd, and ensuring access to both highly mineralized areas and areas for tourism and other uses. We would like to see further clarity around how to manage cumulative effects and how to apply adaptive management to certain activities. We are in the latter stages of developing a policy to manage wetlands across the Yukon, and we hope to see this policy, when finished, reflected in the new version of the plan. Additionally, we would like more detail and prescribed actions around managing and identifying heritage and cultural resources. We appreciate that inclusion of missing and murdered women and girls and two-spirit-plus people is a part of the plan, and we encourage the endorsement of the *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ Strategy* in the Dawson region.

Finally, we want to ensure that this is a plan that we can successfully implement. In the end, the plan will guide us and it will be up to the parties to make it happen on the ground. The Dawson region is a unique place for each of us here in the Yukon, and we will continue to strive to embrace the opportunities that exist and protect the things that Yukoners hold most dear.

Mr. Kent: Thank you for the opportunity to respond to today's ministerial statement regarding the Dawson land use plan.

First off, I would like to thank the Dawson Regional Planning Commission for their extensive work to date. They are doing valuable work that will set the future of the Dawson area for generations. The commission has wrapped up four and a half months of consultation on the draft plan.

I would also like to extend my thanks to all those who attended one of the open houses in Dawson City or Whitehorse or provided input in various stakeholder meetings and workshops, the survey, and in community meetings.

The final recommended plan is slated for release in the spring of 2022. The minister has mentioned a number of changes that the Yukon government would like to see with the plan. I checked the Dawson planning commission website this morning and was unable to find a copy of the document, so I am curious if the minister can tell us where we can find written submissions regarding the draft plan and, in particular, the submission prepared by the Yukon government. If it's not available online, I'm hoping that the minister will commit to tabling that submission here in this Legislature.

I also want to bring up point 3(d) under section 4 of the confidence and supply agreement between the Liberals and the NDP that talks about the future land use planning processes. It says that the Liberal and NDP caucuses — and I quote: "... are committed to accelerate the pace at which the Land Use Planning (LUP) process, mandated under Chapter 11 of the Yukon First Nation Final Agreements, takes place." The CASA also goes on to say — and I quote: "As such, adequate resources will be committed to complete ongoing LUP processes and to initiate new LUP processes as agreed to with First Nation governments."

I am hoping that, when the minister responds here today, he will tell us how that pace will be accelerated and what additional resources have been put in place to accelerate land use planning. Can the minister also provide us a prioritized list of regional land use plans and timing of when they will be initiated?

Ms. White: The Yukon NDP is happy to see that the third out of eight land use plans is nearing completion. When the *Umbrella Final Agreement* was finalized in 1990, the Yukon government committed to the importance of land use planning and committed to the completion of those plans. We all know that land use planning minimizes actual or potential land use conflicts, and we have seen first-hand how these conflicts can grow worse without planning. It recognizes and promotes the cultural values of Yukon First Nation peoples and that certain cultural activities are intrinsically linked to the land. Land use planning ensures sustainable development by developing social, cultural, economic, and environmental policies that apply to the management, protection, and use of land, water, and resources in an integrated and coordinated manner. Land use planning spells out how and where land uses may or may not occur and increases land use certainty. Land use planning is also one of the strongest tools that we have to protect critical wildlife habitat and important ecological areas.

Thank you to the Dawson Regional Planning Commission members, past and present, for your hard work on this

enormous task. Thank you to the members of the public and stakeholders who made submissions. Your input is so important to creating a strong plan that reflects the needs of the community.

Yukoners know from experience that, when the government provides political direction to a land use planning process rather than submissions based on science and data, the public can lose faith in the process. We saw the result of this when the Yukon Party played politics with the Peel plan. So, when this Liberal government submitted its conservation values map to the commission, there were some curious and glaring omissions. The discrepancy between the Yukon government's map and the one submitted by the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in is stark. The map submitted by the Liberal government suggests that less than half of the planning area has conservation value. A highlight of this absence is that the core range of the Fortymile caribou herd was not included. Large sections of mining claims are cut out from the conservation areas suggesting that they too hold no environmental value. To be clear, this means that, according to the Liberal government, more than 50 percent of the planning area has no conservation value. However, the mining values map that they submitted is very different. Every square inch is shown to have at least moderate value for mining.

So, it leaves Yukoners wary of what they saw with previous government interference — and they asked the question: Is this map highlighting areas of conservation value produced by biologists, or did the Liberal government, like previous governments, help along the way?

The minister spoke about centering the values of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in in the plan, but we ask ourselves if the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in are in agreement with these statements. With only four percent of the area set for legal protections, the vast majority of the Fortymile caribou herd's range will be open for development. As the minister rightly stated, we still don't know what the wetlands policy will hold for so many sensitive areas.

With the recent climate talks in Scotland, ecological protection has never been more important. I look forward to continued public participation in this process and a push for stronger and clearer protections for vital wildlife habitat and cultural sites in all land use planning.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would also like to thank the members opposite for acknowledging the work of the planning commission and for all those Yukoners who submitted comments to the draft plan as the commission now will work toward preparing a final recommended plan.

I understand, from talking with the department, that there were lots of submissions, so I'm sure that it's going to take a little while for the commission to get everything up online. I'm happy to commit to tabling our response. Of course, there are lots of elements that are technical and so it's a lengthy response, although the parts that I believe that Yukoners and members here will be interested in are more focused. I'm happy to submit that.

We have made a commitment to land use planning. When we go to the Yukon Forum, we hear that it is a priority across the territory. We will work through the Yukon Forum and, of course, we also have to work with the Government of Canada to set priorities, but I have been tasked through my mandate letter to accelerate land use planning, and I will continue to follow up on that work.

I would like to note for everybody that, when the draft land use plan was tabled — I think it was in June — I was in Dawson City for the event where I joined the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in in thanking the commission for all their hard work. I also announced that day that our government had temporarily withdrawn the remainder of high conservation value areas identified in the draft plan. That included just under 45 percent of the area of the plan. That's counting Tombstone Park, so all the areas that the commission had identified as being for conservation were then set aside so that it would not create any conflict. These interim withdrawals will help to ensure that wildlife, wetlands, and key conservation areas remain protected during the remainder of the land use planning process.

Land use planning is vital for the future of our territory. It is important for environmental, cultural, and economic reasons, and successful plans take into consideration the diverse interests and values of Yukoners and provide certainty for those who work and live in the area.

Our Liberal government fundamentally believes that it is vital to respect the land use planning process to ensure that it is effective. We have seen what happened in the past when the process was not respected. After years of turmoil, the actions of the government of the day, for the Peel planning process, went all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. What Yukoners already know is that our territory cannot afford for the same mistakes to happen again. This is why our government is committed to openness, transparency, and respecting the process. That's what Yukoners deserve.

Again, I want to congratulate the Dawson Regional Planning Commission with the support of the Yukon Land Use Planning Council for their hard work in developing this draft plan. We look forward to reviewing the feedback from Yukoners as the commission develops a final recommended plan.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Before we begin Question Period today, the Chair will make a statement regarding a point of order raised by the Member for Lake Laberge during Question Period on Thursday, November 4, 2021.

After reviewing the Blues, the Chair finds that the statement made by the Minister of Education, including terms such as "spread misinformation" in the context of calling a member irresponsible, is tending toward accusing another member of uttering a deliberate falsehood.

I would caution all members to temper their remarks so that it is always clear that they are not accusing members of uttering deliberate falsehoods, either directly or indirectly. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

This brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Whitehorse Emergency Shelter

Mr. Dixon: Last week we raised a number of concerns about the ongoing operation of the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and its impact on surrounding businesses and residences. When we noted that at least one business had cited the emergency shelter as contributing to their decision to close their doors, the minister dismissed that. She said that the emergency shelter did not drive the decision to close. Once again, the minister is putting words in the mouth of an affected stakeholder, and once again, they are telling us that they found the minister's words insulting and wrong.

As we said last week, the changes that the Liberals have made to the operations of the emergency shelter are negatively impacting businesses and surrounding residences. Will the minister agree to review the operations of the emergency shelter and make changes to ensure that surrounding businesses and residences aren't faced with the type of negative impacts that they have experienced in the past few years?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It won't surprise anyone that I don't agree with the preamble to that question. As a matter of fact, I know that business owner personally and would never presume to speak on her behalf.

I'm very pleased to share that we have implemented most of the recommendations of the 2020-21 community safety plan, including those related to ensuring the safety of shelter clients, drop-in guests, and staff and enhancing the shelter's strategic operational governance.

Developing the community safety plan included bringing together government and community partners identified as key service providers or groups directly impacted by the shelter's operations — nearby businesses, the community, nearby schools, et cetera. We continue to explore the options that support creating a safe and harmonious community for shelter clients, neighbouring residents, and businesses. Our goal is to increase access to culturally appropriate and trauma-informed supports and services to increase wellness for all.

Mr. Dixon: I'm glad that the minister mentioned the community safety plan, because when the government led the creation of the 2020-21 community safety plan, they heard the same things that we're hearing today. According to that plan, more work is needed to be done to address the challenges created by the shift in operational approach that the Liberals brought in when they took over the facility in 2019.

The plan notes challenges such as large and sometimes unruly gatherings outside the shelter, property damage, vandalism, theft, sexual acts, and littering within the shelter's proximity as well as increases in openly shared public drinking and drug use, and the list goes on.

So, beyond just exploring options, what steps is the government taking to address the numerous issues that were brought forward during the creation of the community safety plan, and continue to be raised by the business community, that are affecting the viability of businesses in the vicinity of the emergency shelter?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Our government has established an agreement with the Council of Yukon First Nations to develop a program to enhance safety in the shelter vicinity and to strengthen cultural programming within the shelter.

It is important to remind Yukoners that, when the shelter was chosen for that location, the former Yukon Party government was in power. In fact, that shelter building was designed and placed where it is with absolutely no plan for any management or programming for clients who might come to the shelter — all negligible on their behalf.

All of the work that we have done to not only open the shelter, but to determine the appropriate way for clients to be able to interact and to be safe in that space, has been done by our government. We continue to explore the options and support creating a safe and harmonious community shelter for clients, neighbouring residents, and businesses. Our goal is to increase access to culturally appropriate and trauma-informed supports and services to increase wellness.

Mr. Speaker, I will no doubt be accused of repeating that, but it bears repeating. Yukoners need to hear from us with respect to the plan going forward and the work that is being done.

Mr. Dixon: As many businesses have noted, the emergency shelter has been in that same area for a very long time; however, the real problems began in 2019 when the Liberals took over the facility and changed a number of the operational plans for that. There are a number of key action items that were contemplated in the 2020-21 community safety plan that are in response to the growing number of negative behaviours and incidents that have resulted in the shift in programming that the Liberals made in 2019. Those include: expanding Yukon government security services to include the shelter and exploring the feasibility of implementing a community program that provides a uniformed presence in and around the shelter.

So, can the minister update us as to whether or not those things have been completed, and will she also recognize that the steps taken to date haven't been enough and that further changes are needed? Will she agree to review the ongoing operations of the emergency shelter and agree to consult with affected businesses and residences about further changes to the way in which the shelter is run?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would like to note, as did the member opposite, that our Liberal government has had a shift in programming — first of all, there was no programming — but it was absolutely a shift in programming to a client-centred approach.

As part of the agreement with the Council of Yukon First Nations, we will develop an engagement and consultation strategy to gather the perspectives of all interested and affected parties, including businesses, NGOs, Yukon First Nations, homeless and street-involved persons, neighbours, RCMP, bylaw officials, Emergency Medical Services, Health and Social Services, Justice, leadership, and staff — a broad spectrum of individuals who will help us go forward and solve the issues that are of concern to the neighbours. Again, our goal is to increase access to culturally appropriate, trauma-informed

supports and services to increase wellness, something the shelter has never focused on before.

Question re: *Child and Family Services Act* review

Ms. Clarke: Last week, the government tabled the annual report for the Child and Youth Advocate office. That report highlights significant concerns with the government's current approach toward the review of the *Child and Family Services Act*. As we know, the former Minister of Health and Social Services launched a review of this act in 2018. In March and again in November 2020, the Child and Youth Advocate requested information on the status of that review. According to that report, this information request is still outstanding.

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us why the government is withholding information from the Child and Youth Advocate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Once again, it won't surprise anyone that I don't agree with that accusation of the member opposite. We continue to work together with respect to the *Child and Family Services Act* and the legislative amendments promised. As a matter of fact, I spent pretty close to three hours on a Zoom call with the Leader of the Official Opposition during the last election talking exactly about early learning childcare and the importance of that and the importance of the changes to the *Child and Family Services Act* as part of that conversation.

We continue to work with our Yukon First Nations on the child and family services branch legislative changes, responding to the report that was, in fact, *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. I look forward to further responses as we go forward.

Ms. Clarke: To quote from page 18 of the Child and Youth Advocate annual report — and I quote: "To date, YCAO has not yet been provided with requested information about policy or legislative changes and was not further consulted regarding the obligation of governments to ensure children's rights are meaningfully considered in decisions." As indicated, these information requests were first submitted to the government in March 2020. This is over a year and a half ago.

Can the minister please explain why, after such a long period of time, the Liberal government has still not provided this information to the Child and Youth Advocate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Our government is always committed to working with the legislative officers. In fact, I used to be one, so I completely respect their jurisdiction and the understanding of the work they do.

In July 2020, the Child and Family Services Act Steering Committee was established, with representation from 12 Yukon First Nations, and is co-chaired by the Council of Yukon First Nations' executive director and the director of Family and Children's Services. That steering committee has provided direction and advice on proposed amendments relating to the *Child and Family Services Act*. That work continues.

There has been incredible dedication and support shown by Yukon First Nations to this legislative work. This collaborative work does not go unnoticed. I want to thank the steering committee and members for their continued efforts as

we work together toward a new piece of legislation and amending the act.

Ms. Clarke: By withholding this information from the Child and Youth Advocate, the Liberal government is actually impeding the advocate's ability to do her job. According to her annual report, the requested records are necessary for the advocate to provide a child's rights analysis or proposed policy and legislative amendments by the government. By not cooperating with the advocate, the government is preventing this important work from being completed.

Will the minister start working with the advocate and agree to provide all the requested information immediately — yes or no?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I won't make that commitment on the floor. I will make the commitment to work with the Child and Youth Advocate with respect to long-awaited *Child and Family Services Act* amendments — and the focus that we have at the moment of working with Yukon First Nations to determine how the act amendments should go forward.

This legislative work will make a real difference in the lives of children, youth, and families. These efforts are focused on supporting children to remain connected with their families and communities where possible. It aligns with our government's commitment to address the overrepresentation of First Nations children in care.

Working collaboratively with Yukon First Nation governments at this stage of the process, and the Council of Yukon First Nations, has provided us the opportunity to bring forward amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act* that respond to the 2019 report, *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. It is work that is absolutely critical and we are doing it.

Question re: COVID-19 school protocols

Ms. White: There aren't many schools left in the Yukon that have not reported a positive COVID case. We're not talking about a few isolated cases anymore. In some schools, multiple classes have been exposed to COVID. Many of these kids are under 12 and too young to be vaccinated. With the rapidly increasing number of positive COVID cases, we can only expect more cases in more schools. Parents are worried, and for good reasons.

What's the government's plan to curb the fast spread of COVID-19 throughout Yukon schools?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The health and safety of students and staff is one of our first priorities. I want to start with that.

We know that it has been a very challenging time, and the start to the year has been very difficult. We work with the Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit and the office of the chief medical officer of health to ensure that necessary measures are in place to protect all students and staff when there are cases connected to schools. As we started out — there are a number of cases connected with schools.

We continue to monitor and adjust school operations to support students and families based on the current COVID-19 context and recommendations from the Yukon's chief medical officer of health.

We are seeing more positive cases for sure, which are requiring exposure notifications to schools; however, widespread transmission is occurring at the community level in Whitehorse. Rather than within schools themselves, that is really where the challenge is. Schools still remain a low-risk environment for transmission and are safe and available for students who are able to attend school.

I will continue building on my answer around this. It is an important discussion for us to have on the floor of the Legislature.

Ms. White: Although I appreciated the response, maybe the minister could just direct parents to where they could find that plan to stop the spread of COVID in schools.

Today, we tabled a letter from parents concerned about the COVID situation in schools. At 10:00 a.m. this morning, there were 53 signatures, and at 12:30, there were 79. That number keeps rising.

The first request in the letter is for rapid testing protocols to be implemented in all Yukon schools. We are hearing from parents who have had to take their child for COVID testing more than once. Kids are finding the experience more traumatizing each time. Someone told us that their three-year-old will not submit to the test again and that they will need to be sedated if they need another test. Rapid testing is less invasive and less traumatizing for small children. It also provides much faster results.

Will the minister direct her department to use rapid testing to assist schools to respond faster to COVID-19 outbreaks?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question raised by the member opposite. I can indicate, as the Minister of Education has done, that the spread of COVID among youth of all ages — even up to adulthood — is a critical concern. I can indicate that the chief medical officer of health provides the needed information to this government and all Yukoners with respect to the details as noted in this question. That would include rapid testing and its use in schools.

I appreciate the comments and concerns made by the member opposite, but we need to take medical advice from the chief medical officer of health.

I just do want to note for Yukoners that once a pediatric vaccine for children, or individuals between five and 11, is approved and recommended, our immunization teams will begin training and mobilizing to reach the subset of that population across the territory.

As Dr. Theresa Tam has said recently, we expect approval by Health Canada with respect to vaccines for youngsters as soon as possible — weeks, not months.

Ms. White: Unfortunately, Yukon is also stand-alone and one of the only jurisdictions not using rapid testing. So, now facing the worst spread of COVID-19 that our territory has seen, parents and families are becoming more and more concerned and are being left with too many unanswered questions. In some schools that have had a positive case, a whole class, including a teacher, was asked to self-monitor, but in other schools, students and staff who were not fully vaccinated were recommended to stay home and self-isolate. If rapid testing was available, this wouldn't be such an issue.

Why is this government not requiring students or staff who are not fully vaccinated to self-isolate when they have been in close contact with a positive COVID case at the school?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thanks for the question. I will continue on in my answer. Again, this is a very important and timely question. I am surprised that it has taken this many days for it to be spoken about in the Legislature, to be quite frank.

I know that there are plans. The member opposite has asked where the plans can be found. Each and every school has an operational plan that is found on their website that is based on the guidelines from the chief medical officer of health. I know that there are a lot of pressures in schools. School exposure notices are assessed on a case-by-case basis to determine operational adjustments and staffing needs as well. We are ready to deploy certified teaching staff from the central administration building to assist schools in their initial response to YCDC COVID notifications.

I think that one other point I would really like to make while I'm on my feet is that the department, from the beginning, coordinates its COVID-19 response through the Education emergency response team, which is in place to oversee the implementation of Health and Social Services guidelines. There has been a person in place embedded in the Health and Social Services team since the beginning of the school year.

Question re: Chief medical officer of health authority

Ms. Tredger: So, COVID cases are spreading across the Yukon. It has gotten so bad that the chief medical officer of health has — and I quote: "... confirmed there is now widespread community transmission".

Every day, we have new public exposure notices on planes, in shops, at restaurants and bars, and, as my colleague just pointed out, in so many Yukon schools. The Yukon fourth wave is still in full swing, and yet we are the only jurisdiction in Canada without a mask mandate. Masks are one of the easiest defences against COVID-19. They protect everyone. From the vaccine-hesitant to children under 12, masks work.

How many more cases will it take for this government to bring back the mask mandate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thanks to the members opposite for the questions on a very serious consideration. We will continue to do what we have done since the beginning, which is to take the recommendations from the public health officials. We heard from the acting chief medical officer of health last week on the full round of different measures that are being recommended from the chief medical officer. At that time, she was confident in her recommendations. I hope that the Yukon NDP are also confident with the chief medical officer of health's recommendations.

Now, we do know that there has been more clusters and more cases. We do know from *Forging Ahead* — that documentation talked about how we need to be stood up quickly and we need to focus in on particular communities if we need to, but we also need to act based on science. That's what we'll continue to do. I'll be meeting with the chief medical officer of health this afternoon and I will absolutely bring up

the questions from the members opposite at that time. But again, we have a chief medical officer that has been keeping up with NACI recommendations and also following other jurisdictions' epidemiology and different testing methodologies in all other jurisdictions. We are very confident in the office's approach when it comes to testing. We do know that there is a need right now to make sure that our communities are safe with Delta and we will continue to follow the advice of the chief medical officer to do so.

Ms. Tredger: Well, we are all talking about the chief medical officer of health, but since August, power has actually been stripped from the CMOH. Without the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, orders on COVID-19 come from the government, not from public health experts. Sometimes the CMOH can strongly recommend, like when it comes to mask wearing; other times, she can mandate, like self-isolation, but that is because the chief medical officer of health does not have broad ordering powers under the *Public Health and Safety Act*, only limited ones.

Will this Liberal government give the chief medical officer of health the power to mandate broad public health orders needed to manage COVID-19?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I'll have to disagree with the member opposite. The chief medical officer of health has those abilities now with the *Public Health and Safety Act*. So, that is absolutely not the case. Again, with the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, when necessary, the government would be in a position to invoke that act immediately. Again, the premise of the question is not necessarily the case. I don't know why the members opposite think that the chief medical officer has been stripped of any powers. We do know that the Yukon Party has gone back and forth on whether or not they want to support or endorse mandatory vaccinations. What we need right now is all political parties to 100 percent back the medical advice that we are getting from this office.

Ms. Tredger: Last week in the House, we heard that the chief medical officer of health did not have the power to institute a broad mask mandate; today we are told that she does. I would hope that the government is a little clearer internally than they are at communicating externally. Frankly, because the chief medical officer of health's recommendations are not made public —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Tredger: — because the CMOH recommendations are not made public, we only have access to what the government is saying. We are left with second-hand information. Right now, Yukoners are facing the worst rates of COVID-19 transmission to date, yet the CMOH has less power than ever since the start of this pandemic. On top of this, all of the advice from the CMOH goes through the government first. Public health advice should be just that — public. We need to hear directly from the experts. Yukoners need orders directly from the chief medical officer of health.

Will this government make all recommendations from the chief medical officer of health public?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We have weekly updates with chief medical officer of health press conferences. Those have been re-established. For the last 20 months, we have seen a very open and very transparent process when it comes to the recommendations. We have been criticized by the members opposite that, when the recommendations hit the floor of the media room and people get that information at the same time that we are getting it, we don't consult. Now we are being told we need to be more open and transparent and that we need to have more connections with the chief medical officer of health.

Mr. Speaker, I would say that, if you take a look at the meetings that the chief medical officer of health has, whether it be with First Nation governments, municipal governments — our team, the public advisories as well — this is probably the most open and transparent that I have seen. Again, that direct conduit with other levels of government really speaks to the openness and transparency of that particular office.

We will continue to take in all of the recommendations with the rationale from the chief medical officer of health as the Yukon Party and the NDP pick and choose which ones they will support. But we will continue with that method, and we will keep people updated as we have with these press conferences.

Question re: First Nation school governance

Ms. McLeod: October 30 was the deadline for Yukon school councils to pass a motion that would put the question of whether or not to join the First Nation school board to a referendum of the school community on January 30, 2022.

It's our understanding that five school councils have decided to pursue that option. Can the minister confirm that number for us and tell us which schools will be holding referendums? Has there been a public announcement about this?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to have this question on the floor. We have been working very closely to re-establish our relationships with Yukon First Nations since 2016. This is a very important milestone that we have embarked on with Yukon First Nations to establish a Yukon First Nation school board in the Yukon. We want to ensure that schools meet the needs of Yukon First Nation students and to offer all students the opportunity to learn about Yukon First Nation histories, cultures, and languages.

We have been working with the Chiefs Committee on Education on options for establishing a Yukon First Nation school board under the *Education Act*. We believe that this framework agreement and the establishment of the Yukon First Nation school board is an additional option to enable Yukon First Nations to meaningfully shape their children's education and improve their educational outcomes.

The process to establish a school board can start in two ways. I note that the member opposite is looking for something really specific here, and I will get to that.

There are two ways. One is for a school council to pass a resolution. Another way is for a petition of 20 percent of electors in an attendance area to present a petition, and I will continue to build on that and confirm the schools.

Ms. McLeod: I look forward to getting the answers to my first question.

At a presentation on this topic at the recent Yukon Association of School Councils, Boards and Committees at their fall meeting, the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate mentioned that they would be advocating in support of joining the school board. A number of members of the affected school communities are wondering where they can get information about what this means for their respective schools.

Is the minister instructing her department to host information sessions? If so, when will they begin and how many are planned for each affected community?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, I will continue to build on the question. This is a complex bit of work that we are doing with Yukon First Nations. As of October 31, five school councils have passed resolutions to trigger a referendum of the electors within their attendance areas and parents and guardians of any current students in the schools.

As of November 7, the department is aware that there may be two schools that will be seeking petition packages. They will have until December 13 to have those petitions completed.

Then we will be — maybe I'll wait and move to the other information.

The school councils have passed resolutions at: St. Elias Community School in Haines Junction; Johnson Elementary School in Watson Lake and Watson Lake Secondary School in Watson Lake, which is a combined council; Ross River School; the school in Old Crow; and Grey Mountain Primary. We're working with First Nations on a government-to-government basis on education priorities for their citizens, as well, in their traditional territory. We are working with the chief electoral officer to oversee these referendums and then further election

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. McLeod: I appreciate the confirmation of the five school councils. However, I haven't received answers to the rest of my questions.

A number of staff members in affected schools have reached out to us as well. They have many questions regarding the transition in operations if the community agrees to move to the First Nation school board governance.

Can the minister tell us where we should direct staff in order for them to get their questions answered? Will there be information sessions for them? How much engagement has been done with Yukon Teachers' Association to date?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, I have been throughout the territory meeting with school councils since my time in office. I'm having active conversations with those folks, but I note that our department has conducted one particular and very large information session with school councils. There was also, as the member opposite indicated, information provided at the recent general meeting of Yukon school councils. We are now in the area where a referendum will happen in January, so we will be releasing more specific information around that.

Yes, of course, information sessions will happen to inform folks about what to expect and what the establishment of a Yukon First Nation school board will mean to them. Folks will

have an opportunity to decide if that is something that they want to have happen in their school community.

So, again, I am very proud of the work that we are doing with Yukon First Nations. I want to come back to that — a huge milestone for Yukon First Nations to obtain more ability to have a say over the education of their children.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed. We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. Blake): I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Chair: Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 202: *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Community Services — *continued*

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Good afternoon, Madam Chair and everyone. I just want to welcome my officials, Phil MacDonald and Matt King, to the Chamber this afternoon to help me with this departmental debate.

We had a deep, meaningful, and cordial discussion about this department a few days ago, and I'm happy to be back again to discuss it a little bit further. I will say that we ran right into the debate right of the hop and we had a really good discussion about many matters. I wanted to set the table this afternoon about what we are talking about this afternoon, which is the

Supplementary Estimates No. 1. I am very pleased to discuss it this afternoon. It totals about \$12.89 million in operation and maintenance expenditures, of which the largest portion of that figure is for flood response and recovery, which is almost \$11 million.

As this Chamber will know, the majority of the budget increase is for the unprecedented flooding that we saw this past summer in the Southern Lakes and Lake Laberge regions and a few others — Kusawa. The Chair may know that the record snowfall combined with spring melt conditions led to runoffs and rising water levels for waterways throughout these regions. With those unprecedented floods — we have never seen anything like it — came a robust response that saved homes and infrastructure and ensures ongoing support to impacted communities. From Carmacks to Teslin, Carcross, Tagish, Marsh Lake, and Lake Laberge, we did what was necessary to defend homes, infrastructure, and property and to keep people safe.

Our response started early and has been sustained through to this fall. More than 200 people were actively engaged in flood response and mitigation. This led to an extraordinary effort of volunteers, residents, local contractors, businesses, and communities that banded together to bag sand, build berms — enormous berms that come up almost to my chin — and support each other through the emergency. Of course, we acknowledge and thank all of the people involved in responding: citizens, residents, volunteers, local contractors and businesses, Yukon government personnel, Yukon First Nations Wildfire, Manitoba flood specialists, flood incident management professionals from Yukon, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, and, of course, the Canadian Armed Forces. This was indeed the largest flood relief effort in the territory's history with more than 550,000 sandbags and 2,000 super bags deployed to hold back waters that measured 40 centimetres in Lake Laberge and 20 centimetres in Marsh Lake above the previous record seen in 2007.

The almost \$10.97 million included expenses incurred and funds for anticipated recovery costs to come. Expenses included personnel, equipment, rental, transportation, travel, materials, and services. More than \$6 million of the total that I just spoke about is directed toward local contractors for their work on the ground, hauling and stockpiling sand, equipment, and groundwork and related infrastructure. Additionally, more than \$700,000 was used for additional ground support from Yukon First Nations Wildfire who built and maintained flood infrastructure in various locations.

I would like to emphasize my thanks and appreciation to the more than 50 businesses and contractors for their assistance. They diverted resources in order to offer their invaluable support to the overall flood relief effort. I also want to extend a huge thank you to the staff of Protective Services and from across the Yukon government for stepping forward to help. Wildland Fire Management led the incident command alongside the Emergency Measures Organization, and the team did an excellent job in rostering government resources and managing the emergency situation on behalf of the government.

It takes a team of skills, planning, logistics, operations, finance, procurement, communications, public information, recruitment, and more to do the job. The team showed depth, experience, and action. As a matter of fact, when I toured the incident command centre, some of the techniques that we were using in the Yukon went far and away beyond what the BC government was using to manage some of its emergency situations in that province. We were doing some pretty innovative and amazing things here in the territory.

I want to also place an emphasis on the volunteers who came out to support their neighbours, families, and friends and who filled thousands of sandbags among other support jobs. Their efforts — your efforts as Yukoners — saved homes throughout the region.

I want to acknowledge the federal minister for quick action to the request that I made for military assistance. I discussed the need for assistance with the minister, and on July 3, we submitted a request for support to Public Safety Canada through the federal assistance program. The next day, on July 4, Public Safety Canada responded to the request and announced a commitment of more than 100 military personnel to support Yukon's flood relief efforts under Operation LENTUS. The Canadian Armed Forces were on the ground in Whitehorse by July 6. That is literally three days after the formal request was made. Working under the direction of the incident management team in the Southern Lakes, those troops helped build berms, fill sandbags, and place super bags at Army Beach, Carcross, Lake Laberge, South M'Clintock, and Tagish. Their support was invaluable. We couldn't have done it without that unprecedented support.

In all, response personnel and volunteers had built approximately 5.5 kilometres of berms at the height of up to 2.4 metres in some cases at Army Beach and M'Clintock, in addition to the installation of sandbags on properties from Carcross to Lake Laberge. With as many as 120 homes under an evacuation alert for much of the summer, it was a relief to end the state of emergency on September 14, signalling that the worst was behind us. We also recognize that there is a lot of work ahead. Waters remain high, and our team continues with maintenance, cleanup, and recovery planning. As a matter of fact, my colleague, the MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, and I were even discussing some of that recovery planning and cleanup on the break, so it still continues in real time.

Our team is working closely with engineers and technical experts to develop a remediation recovery strategy. This will ensure support to homeowners to recover from floods, to fix community roads and infrastructure, and to plan for longer term mitigations to be better prepared for future flood years.

2021 has been called a "once-in-200-year event", but we also know that climate change is skewing the trend and we can only expect floods to occur again and more frequently. This is why we have entered a state of emergency here in the territory, it is why we are demanding action, and it's why our citizens are demanding action on climate change, because they can see that the effects are on their doorsteps and washing away their front lawns, in this case. They demand action from us. They want us to take action and start to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions

that the territory creates. So, the recovery efforts and long-term flood mitigation plan will be critical as we look to the future.

Madam Chair, I'm going to end this section here. I have more on the actual budgetary items within the supplementary budget this year. I will weave that into our narrative this afternoon as we pursue other questions, but in the interest of getting to the questions of the opposition and the Third Party, I will now relinquish the floor and look forward to hearing their questions.

Ms. McLeod: I want to thank the officials for being with us here again today. It is not my intention to be long this afternoon. I'm happy to hear the minister start his speaking with a discussion of the flooding.

Can the minister provide us with a breakdown of the flood expenses to date?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite, the MLA for Watson Lake, for the question this afternoon. The question was — because there was a bit of a pause: What is the breakdown of flood cost-tracking? I believe that my colleague, the Premier, has already addressed this on the floor of the Legislature, but I am happy to do it again for the member opposite.

The cost of bringing teams from Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba — because the territory hasn't had many experiences with floods, so we did bring in experts from Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba to inform our decisions as we fought this unprecedented event this summer. That cost us \$372,000 for those three teams to come to the territory. Personnel from Yukon government and our department of Community Services came to \$462,000, and that was for overtime, casual hires, et cetera. The contracted workforce was roughly \$700,000. That included Yukon First Nations Wildfire crews. Equipment rental came to \$1.2 million. Those are the actuals to date. That was for heavy equipment rentals — commitments to date. So, the actuals to date are \$1.17 million. There is \$1.35 million with heavy equipment, so that brings it to \$2.5 million for equipment rentals. Equipment replacement was about \$210,000, and that was for purchasing hoses, pumps, et cetera. For transportation, we spent \$63,000 to date — those are the actuals. The commitments signal an amount to about \$177,000. So, we have commitments for \$177,000 for transportation and we have received invoices for \$63,000, for a total allocation for vehicle rentals of \$241,000.

Military transportation — this would be buses to transport military to flood sites — came to \$77,000. Non-vehicle fuel came to \$9,000. Travel for meals, accommodation, et cetera — this would be the military, labourers in the field, military accommodation at the cadet camp — there were no costs there.

The total for travel, meals, accommodation, et cetera for the whole operation was \$547,000. Materiel — sand, rock, poly, et cetera — the current total that we have is \$2.1 million. In services — this would be miscellaneous rentals, pump-outs, et cetera — it came to \$780,000 — for a grand total cost to date of \$8.1 million.

We also have remediation recovery work budgeted at \$2.8 million, roughly. So, the total supplementary approval is for \$10.9 million in round numbers.

Ms. McLeod: When the minister gets up again, perhaps he could just comment on whether or not that is 100-percent recoverable from Canada. I think I heard that in the briefing — but if he could just confirm that.

Can the minister comment on what infrastructure upgrades — or what is the minister's commitment to investigating the needed upgrades to, for instance, Jackfish Bay Road and M'Clintock Road? Particularly, what kind of work is being done to identify any future work that needs to be done that will leave us better prepared to deal with another high-water year in that area?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I want to say — and it's going to get a little bit repetitive, but this was an unprecedented flood this summer. At a time when we were dealing with the pandemic — we still are — and at a time when we are dealing with forest fires and a threatening forest fire season — the markers were not great for that either.

We had 130 government employees, contractors, and volunteers assigned to support the flood response, not to mention all the volunteers and everybody else who chipped in. It was a truly remarkable response. It actually led to the protection from imminent danger. I mean, there was an evacuation order placed on 130 residences this summer, as I've mentioned, and we didn't lose a single one to date, which is just absolutely extraordinary and a real success story.

The Member for Watson Lake wanted to know whether it's 100-percent recoverable. There are financial implications from the work that we did this summer. Eligible expenses for the disaster financial assistance arrangement may be reimbursed to the territory under our cost-sharing formula that is based upon rates determined by the Government of Canada and pro-rated to the territorial population.

The first \$3.27 per capita of expenses will be borne by the territory, so we're on the hook for \$3.25, in round numbers, for every citizen in the territory. That amounts to about, let's say, \$138,000 that we are on the hook for. The next \$6.56 per capita — that's approximately \$277,000 that will be cost-shared — the Government of Canada will cover 50 percent of that. The next \$6.56 — again, \$277,000 will be cost-shared. The Government of Canada will cover 75 percent. So, it's a sliding scale, Madam Chair. For the remainder of eligible expenses, the Government of Canada will cover 90 percent.

So, we're on the hook for some money here. By my rough math, it's in the neighbourhood of about \$280,000 and then — so \$350,000, and then we're on the hook for — so it is around \$500,000 that we are on the hook for ourselves, in very, very rough numbers — “back of napkins” math. Math on the fly is always tricky.

Then we have the remainder of eligible costs. So, after that initial, say, \$700,000 or \$800,000, the Government of Canada will cover 90 percent of the costs. So, we're on the hook for some money. This isn't a 100-percent write-off, but we are backstopped very well by the federal government when it comes to flood relief.

Now, the other question that was on the floor from the Member for Watson Lake had to deal with Jackfish Bay and Sawmill Road, I believe. I heard from the MLA that, during the

flood, the road needs upgrading. I know that my colleague, the Minister of Highways and Public Works, was on the site, toured it, and had a good look at what was going on at Jackfish Bay Road. Community Services is working with Highways and Public Works to make the necessary improvements as deemed necessary by Highways and Public Works. We will check to make sure that the status of the work is done.

My colleague, the Minister of Highways and Public Works, will be on the floor fairly soon, too, and might have more context more quickly if you want to talk to him directly.

As for Sawmill Road, we believe that work has been done. We can check into that again. Highways and Public Works might be able to provide some detail when they are on the floor to discuss their supplementary estimates, but we knew that were improvements that had to be done to both of those roads. Some of that work has been undertaken. We will get back to the member opposite to make sure that it has been done or with what the status of that work is.

Ms. McLeod: I want to thank the minister for that. On October 28, the minister advised the Member for Takhini-Kopper King that a formal assessment of library facilities was done in the summer of 2019 and that this report, which came as a result, will inform decisions going forward with regard to evolving library trends.

My question is whether or not this has been posted for interested parties to read and whether or not this report has been shared with all of the libraries.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will say, to begin this conversation about libraries, that the 14 community libraries located throughout the territory are managed by staff who are hired by volunteer boards. These libraries are mainly co-located with other groups like schools, community centres, and municipal offices. As the Member for Watson Lake just noted, a formal assessment of library facilities was done during the summer of 2019 under the tenure of my colleague, the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. The resulting report is helping with long-term planning to ensure that the community libraries keep pace with evolving library trends related to collection, development, technology, and programming.

Our response to COVID-19 was compatible with the assessment — for example, installing Plexiglass where requested — and we are committed to ensuring that library facilities meet the needs of their communities. The in-depth work and analysis being done now will provide a solid foundation for decisions on library facilities into the future.

The pertinent part of that question was: Is that report available? We believe that it is posted online, but my colleague, Deputy Minister King, will look into that and make sure that it is posted online. If it is not, we will certainly make that available to the public because there is really no reason why it shouldn't be.

Ms. McLeod: I thank the minister for that.

I have questions around EMS and fire. Of course, we have had this discussion many times. Recruitment and retention of volunteers is challenging. When was the last time that there was a recruitment drive for new volunteers? Was that in every community where those services are provided?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the question from the Member for Watson Lake. I started out today by talking about the supplementary budget and some of the material that is contained therein. Included in that is roughly \$1 million to enhance the Yukon Emergency Medical Services in Watson Lake and for volunteer recruitment and retention for the 17 Emergency Medical Services stations across the territory.

Emergency Medical Services needs to evolve with the changing demographics in our territory, which includes a growing Yukon population, increases in call volumes and services, and the need to invest in development and supports for our people. \$470,000 of the supplementary budget will increase capacity of the emergency response communication centre, ensuring emergency response communication officers are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. This investment will improve safety for all emergency medical services providers by providing improved communications and real-time tracking of emergency medical services, vehicles, and related staff.

\$156,000 is targeted toward recruitment and retention of volunteers through an investment in clinical education. This will meet the training needs of our community volunteer responders and ensure an expert resource is available to offer them timely clinical support. This service is a priority for our community volunteer responders, and we are pleased to provide the support they have asked for. It comes with a commitment to enhance psychological wellness for first responders, safety, and mental health services for our employees and community volunteer responders.

The balance of the budget increase for Emergency Medical Services is to make permanent a new staffing model at the Watson Lake ambulance station. This adds much-needed emergency response capacity and creates permanent employment opportunities in the community.

When I was down in Watson Lake, Madam Chair, and speaking to the constituents of the Member for Watson Lake, they brought this to my attention; they said it was important, and I am very happy to be delivering on this service to Watson Lake, which has — among all the communities in the territory, except Whitehorse — a very large call volume and also has a very large geographic area to service, recognizing that it is important that we put some more resources to that region and to that Emergency Medical Services station.

I think that it is appropriate, at this time, to thank the Yukon Emergency Medical Services for their dedication and service by supporting this allocation in this budget.

We place tremendous value on the contributions that volunteers make to provide emergency services throughout the territory. This is why, through Emergency Medical Services, we support community responders by supplying vehicles, medical and safety equipment, uniforms, fleet management services, station maintenance, administrative services, online education, and responder training in 15 communities. We take a collaborative approach to providing emergency services throughout the Yukon, and we rely on our partners in the communities to help us recruit, recognize, and retain volunteer emergency responders. We also rely on our paid responders,

community members, allied response agencies, and local health care providers to help with local capacity needs. Community Nursing, for example, provides really critical services within our communities and works with Emergency Medical Services to provide that support to our communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted additional safety measures for our first responders. Protocols were put in place to address patient COVID assessment and scene safety, crew training and station spatial separation, stockpile of personal protection equipment, facility access restrictions, and safe work practices to mitigate the risk of transmission throughout the territory.

I mentioned earlier that Watson Lake has a fairly high incident volume. We are talking — in 2020, they had 491 calls registered at Watson Lake. Whitehorse had 6,094 calls, to put that in comparison, and the largest call volume beyond that was in Dawson City at 274 calls, which is roughly half of what we saw in Watson Lake.

The total incident volume in 2020 was 8,600, almost 8,700 calls. We have 128 EMS volunteers, as of July 28, 2021, and we have 71 EMS employees. So, the majority of our service is provided by volunteers throughout the territory. I can say that Yukon Emergency Medical Services recognizes that training and education are essential in supporting the effective delivery of emergency medical services. Using a variety of training methods, Yukon Emergency Medical Services delivers a robust program to meet the needs of community responders throughout the Yukon. This includes a training centre, mobile training unit, high-fidelity training mannequins, online learning platforms, local training nights, certificate courses, and two dedicated clinical educators.

Yukon Emergency Medical Services also provides accredited core training and certification for Emergency Medical Services community responders, through the Emergency Care and Safety Institute emergency medical responder program. We do know that, at this time in Canada's history, emergency medical responders — paramedics — are in very high demand. Recruiting more should always be a goal of the territory. We are working to ensure that we have a good supply of paramedics in the territory, and we will continue to do so.

I think I will leave it there, knowing that it is important that we recruit, and by providing the training that I have outlined in the last couple of minutes, you can see that we are investing heavily in having a very good emergency medical response team throughout the Yukon.

Ms. McLeod: On the matter of training for our EMS people, I have heard that the training is too much or that the training is not enough, depending on the community that you are talking to. One of the great topics that comes up is the amount of time volunteers are asked to be away from their homes to take training in Whitehorse.

I am wondering if the minister has looked at any possible ways to make training more accessible and less time-consuming for residents who want to volunteer for these services and, at the same time, look after their responsibilities to their home communities.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: So, the question posed a few minutes ago was about how onerous it can be for volunteers to get the training they need in the community.

I urge the member opposite, if she is hearing these complaints, to please let me know which communities they are coming from, and we will take a look at it on a case-by-case basis.

I will say that a clinical educator visits every community in the territory four times a year to help with the training of our volunteers. We have enhanced that with this supplementary budget that we are talking about this afternoon with additional resources with an aim to recruiting and retaining more emergency medical services responders. That is really what we're talking about today and that is why this budget item is before the House that we are here discussing this afternoon; it is to make sure that we have enhanced the clinical educator who already visits every community in the territory four times a year.

As somebody providing medical care to the citizens of the territory on a voluntary basis, there are standards that they have to maintain to do that. I absolutely admire and respect those who step forward to do this in the territory because it is a difficult job. I will say that there are different levels of training, and people can choose their own path. Not everybody has to take the paramedic training, which is certainly a lot more intensive and takes a lot more time. They can also go with emergency responder training, which is generally the path used by many of our volunteers in rural Yukon and is a less rigorous training standard to provide that critical service in remote Yukon communities. That is a choice that individuals can make when they are actively stepping up to support and help their fellow citizens in rural Yukon, which is absolutely admirable. We all owe them a debt of gratitude.

We are also looking at other ways we can help to support our teams in rural Yukon. Perhaps there is someone who doesn't actually want to actually provide the medical care, but they are willing to drive and they are great driver. So, maybe we can team somebody who is willing to volunteer as a driver in rural Yukon with somebody who has EMS training so you have some supports for people. We are looking at these new models of service delivery to help expand the volunteer base in rural Yukon and to carry some of the load in different ways.

So, we are looking at many, many ways to support our teams of emergency medical responders throughout the territory. I really appreciate the question. It's an important one. It's one of the reasons why we have \$1 million identified in the supplementary budget, which is to support our emergency medical responders throughout the territory.

There is another point that I would like to make in closing. Currently in Watson Lake, there is a competition underway for two full-time EMS staff — two more FTEs added to the government roster. That hiring process is currently underway. We hope to have those positions filled fairly soon, but that hiring process is currently underway to bring two more EMS professionals into Watson Lake, into the members opposite's riding.

Ms. McLeod: I thank the minister for his comments. I appreciate that.

Currently, Watson Lake has three, plus some auxiliary personnel. The Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes was on his feet earlier in this session talking about 3.2 new FTEs for Watson Lake. Of course, the minister just referenced two FTEs for Watson Lake.

So, here's my question: How many people do we have? We had 3.2. Do we have 3.2 new ones or just two new ones? What is going to be the full complement of employees for EMS?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I really want to commend the Member for Watson Lake for the question. I think that it is important. It is vital that we bring accurate information to dispel any errors in this House. There are obviously questions in the mind of the member opposite, and I am really glad we can bring some clarity to them.

My colleague, the MLA for beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, did rise during budget discussion and referenced a number that had been given to opposition parties, I believe, during their budget briefings. The Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes is entirely correct.

This year, as part of this budget exercise that we are talking about now, we are adding 3.2 new FTEs to Watson Lake — three new people providing services to Yukoners in Watson Lake. It is vitally important work, and we are happy to do this because this is the service that people need in rural Yukon.

That brings the roster in Watson Lake to four full-time employees at the Emergency Medical Services station. We will have one paid part-time employee at the Emergency Medical Services station in Watson Lake, and we will have three volunteers at the EMS station in Watson Lake. There will be a total of 3.2 new full-time equivalents in Watson Lake, and that will bring the total commitment to four full-time, one part-time, and three volunteers in that station when it is fully staffed.

Ms. McLeod: This is not really working out for me — this math — because we had three full-time employees and we had one or two auxiliary employees. Now we are adding 3.2 to come up with four, so there is something being lost in the translation here. I am happy to engage with the minister by letter on this issue, but it is certainly going to be an important one for my community because, by my calculations, we are getting one new person, which we appreciate — absolutely. I am going to leave that for now because I have limited time this afternoon.

Can the minister tell us which rural communities have functional fire protection and ambulance coverage in those rural communities?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: By way of introduction, I will say that recruiting and retaining volunteer firefighters is a challenge in the Yukon and across Canada. We continue to work with communities to ensure volunteer emergency response coverage in our communities. We provide oversight, training, and equipment for community fire departments but are only able to do so with a core of volunteers who give their time and effort to train and be available. Throughout the territory, the Fire Marshal's Office presents public education campaigns for life

safety and fire prevention, operates community fire halls, maintains firefighting equipment and vehicles, provides training that meets the national standards, and supports municipalities with training and resources.

I am going to start with volunteer fire departments. It is going to take a little bit of time, and it's going to be quite a comprehensive list of where we are at with volunteer fire departments in the territory. I beg the Chamber's indulgence to go through some of these numbers.

Let me just say to begin that, in the 16 unincorporated communities, volunteer departments require interested community members and assistance to recruit and retain a minimum number of volunteer firefighters. The fire services that are provided by the Fire Marshal's Office include the provision of all fire response equipment and vehicles, training and logistics, as well as the administration of community volunteer fire halls, such as training records, honoraria, and standard operating procedures.

The eight municipal departments require interested community members and assistance from the municipality to recruit and retain volunteer firefighters to provide fire services. The Yukon government supports municipalities by providing funding and provisioning resources on an as-needed basis and as capacity allows. This includes training for staff and volunteers, as well as equipment on a case-by-case basis to cover areas not easily reachable by unincorporated halls.

During the COVID era, volunteers have been trained in infectious disease and blood and airborne pathogens control since 2012, and the use of N95 masks and gloves is standard practice when working around patients. The COVID-19 pandemic prompted the policy and use of cloth-based coverings for travel in vehicles to and from incidents and training.

As of February 3, 2021, Beaver Creek in 2020 had six incidents, one fire volunteer, and no paid employees. Burwash Landing had six incidents, seven volunteers, and no paid employees. Carmacks — municipal — had four incidents, and they have nine fire volunteers and no paid employees. Carcross had one incident in 2020, and they have three volunteers in Carcross and no paid employees. In Dawson City, the municipal fire department had 170 incidents in 2020, and they have 29 volunteers in the Klondike and one paid employee. In Destruction Bay, they had no incidents, and they have no volunteers and no paid employees. In Faro, there were five incidents in 2020, and they have eight fire volunteers and no paid employees. In Golden Horn, they had 21 incidents, and they have 25 volunteers and no paid employees. In Haines Junctions, the municipal fire department had 11 incidents in 2020, and they have 15 fire volunteers and no paid employees. In Ibex, they had 24 incidents in 2020, 28 fire volunteers and no paid employees. In the Klondike Valley, outside of the municipality, they had 12 incidents recorded in 2020, and they have 10 volunteers and no paid employees. In Keno, they acknowledged two incidents in 2020, and they have no fire volunteers and no paid employees. In Marsh Lake, they had 11 recorded incidents in 2020, and they have 21 volunteers and no paid employees. In Mount Lorne, there were eight incidents in 2020 and 16 volunteers and no paid employees. In Mayo, the

municipal fire department there had four incidents in 2020, and they have six volunteers and no paid employees. We just toured their new fire facility there. It is just wonderful, and I'm really happy to see that now in service.

In Mendenhall, we had no incidents in 2020, and we have no fire volunteers and no paid employees. In Old Crow, there were no incidents in 2020 and no fire volunteers in Old Crow and no paid employees. In Pelly Crossing, we had one incident in 2020, and we have no volunteers in Pelly currently and no paid employees. I had a good meeting with the people in Pelly when I was up there with the chief and council, and they are looking at resurrecting their fire services in that community, but have not yet finished the training.

In Ross River, we had one incident in 2020, and we have no volunteers and no paid employees. In Tagish, we had two incidents in 2020, and we have eight volunteers in Tagish and no paid employees. In Teslin, the municipal fire department — we have no data on the incident volumes in Teslin as of 2020. We have three volunteers in that community.

In Watson Lake, the municipality has recorded 53 incidents in 2020. The number of fire volunteers in Watson Lake is 19 currently, and they have one paid employee.

Sommet Yukon has 34 fire volunteers. SHOT Yukon has 20 volunteers. Upper Liard has one volunteer and had no incidents in 2020. Whitehorse municipal had 678 incidents in 2020. They have no volunteers, but they have 26 paid firefighters in Whitehorse as a municipality. At the Whitehorse airport, no data was provided on the incident volume. We don't have any volunteers. We have 13 paid employees up there.

For a total, we had 959 fire responses in the territory in 2020. We have 263 total volunteers in the territory, and we have 41 paid employees.

I hope that goes some measure to answer the member opposite's question.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you for those numbers. I found them quite interesting, actually.

Is there a plan B for unincorporated communities if there is a fire and there are no volunteers or capacity to deal with that?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The delivery of fire services in the Yukon's unincorporated communities is challenging given our remote and small population base. It is a challenge to recruit and retain volunteers, as I have said a few times this afternoon, and to maintain the necessary levels of training and certification to ensure the health and safety of our volunteers.

We have an independent review currently underway. The individual was up here in the territory in September and October. The report is in its final stages. I'm hopeful, after reviewing it, to be able to make it available to the public in fairly short order. That review is well underway, and it examines the current model for the provision of rural fire services across the territory. As I said, I look forward to the improvement that focused recommendations will bring to fire service delivery throughout the territory.

The contractor has drawn upon the expertise of territorial fire chiefs, fire service members, community members, and

community leaders. I really do appreciate — and want to thank everyone who took the time to participate.

In my community tour this summer, at the end of this fall — I guess it was fall; all the seasons are blurring together. But following my community tour this fall, I had the opportunity to talk to municipal leaders and also to talk to fire chiefs across the territory. They had all contributed to this independent review of rural fire services. They thought that it was a great exercise and were looking forward to its recommendations.

Firefighting is a dangerous occupation, as we all know, and occupational health and safety requirements set out by that act in regulations — it is simply not lawful to place individuals in a fire situation with equipment that they are not trained or certified to operate. Equipment and training are available for communities with a core of volunteers who are willing to give their time and effort to become trained and maintain certification as firefighters. I will also say that we have memorandums of understanding with municipal fire departments to provide aid to the nearest fire if they are available to do so.

We work together in this territory so often when it comes to calamity, such as we might see with a fire, and I am really grateful to the cooperation and professionalism and the looking out for our neighbours that we see so often in this territory, as we all lend a hand in times of need, for those in need. I think that we see that in the territory all the time, and I really have to give a shout-out to municipalities that so very often step up to help their neighbours in need, despite the enormous distances that they may have to travel to provide that aid.

Ms. McLeod: I thank the minister for that information.

In October of this year, the Building and Safety Standards branch sent out a notice to contractors informing them of a fee if re-inspection was required. Can the minister tell us what the reasoning is for fining contractors if they make a mistake?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the question this afternoon. This question revolves around the Building and Safety Standards branch, which ensures that the structures that we live, work, and play in are safely built. From January 1, 2021 to September 1, 2021, building safety inspectors conducted 712 inspections.

That's 712 inspections in a nine-month period. They did 694 building inspections; they did 1,946 electrical inspections; they did 181 plumbing inspections; they did 87 oil heating inspections, 24 boiler inspections, one elevator inspection, and 360 gas inspections. Those hundreds of inspections were done on 712 sites. The Building and Safety Standards branch adopted during the pandemic — sorry, not adopted, adapted — my error — during the pandemic and found creative ways to continue their important work, despite the COVID-19 restrictions we found ourselves under, by way of virtual and digital inspections and strict mask wearing, proper hand hygiene, and physical distancing when inspections had to be in person. The branch completed the same number of inspections in 2020 and 2021 as they would in typical years. We didn't see — despite the challenges of the season, they managed to carry on their jobs and keep those inspections going.

The Building and Safety Standards branch develops, interprets, administers, and enforces building, plumbing, electrical, and mechanical standards, as well as administering area development regulations. Within Whitehorse, the Building and Safety Standards branch inspects all electrical, gas, elevator, ski lift, and large boiler installations. For all their permits and inspections within city boundaries, the Building and Safety Standards branch collaborates with the City of Whitehorse. As well as developing common inspection standards for Government of Yukon building inspectors, the branch works with the City of Whitehorse to develop shared inspections standards. These standards contribute to safer dwellings, workplaces, and public spaces. The branch records work done under permit on a building. This information can be used by the legal and banking communities in their assessment of the properties.

In partnership with the Fire Marshal's Office and Yukon Housing Corporation, the branch contributes annually to seasonal public awareness campaigns to improve home heating safety. This activity focuses on the installation of fire and carbon monoxide alarms in every dwelling in the territory, the installation of fire alarm systems, and the requirement that the work be done by qualified tradespeople. In this Chamber, we all know how important this work is. We just had tributes during Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week on how important it is that we get this work done and inspected properly.

The Building and Safety Standards branch also contributes to national and regional conversations on emerging issues in building safety, such as tiny homes, the effects of permafrost on building foundations, and amendments to the national building, plumbing, and electrical codes.

The member opposite brought a very specific issue to the floor of the House. Right now, I really do need more information on this. If the member could please provide me with the information she has, either through casework or in tabling the information on the floor of the House, going through standard channels, I would be more than happy to casework and get the answers the Member for Watson Lake is looking for this afternoon.

Ms. McLeod: Yes, of course, we will pursue this through other means to get the information that we are after. It certainly is an item of concern for many contractors.

I want to thank the officials for being here today and helping us out. My questions for today are done. I am going to turn this over to the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

Ms. White: I thank my colleague for sharing the floor.

Last time we were here, the minister and I were talking about various issues, including his helpful direction that not all decisions, but some decisions, from the residential tenancies office can be found online.

A question I had is, once decisions are made, what follow-up does the residential tenancies office have? If a decision is made, what kind of follow-up is there?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I welcome my colleague from the Third Party to the discussion this afternoon. I will start this afternoon with the residential tenancies office. Most landlord and tenant relationships are long-standing and mutually

beneficial, but when disagreements arise, as they are wont to do between landlords and tenants, they may come to the residential tenancies office for help.

The office offers a broad range of services, including education, mediation, and formal dispute resolution to landlords and tenants. The residential tenancies office works to help landlords and tenants avoid conflict by educating them on their rights and responsibilities. The office provides the residential landlord and tenant handbook, outreach activities at community events, and workshops. The residential tenancies office continues to provide fair and efficient dispute resolution through mediation and written decisions. The process of dispute resolution gives the party the certainty of legally binding decisions, with significantly lower wait times than if the dispute went to court. The residential tenancies office does not advocate for either landlords or tenants. The residential tenancies officers are neutral third parties. They must maintain their objectivity or they will not be able to resolve disputes without concerns of bias.

I will also say that, to date, in the 2020-21 year, the residential tenancies office has resolved 75 landlord and tenant matters through the formal resolution process. It resolved more than 130 in 2019-20. The office also worked with many landlords and tenants to reach early settlement of disputes so that formal hearings were not required. Since its opening in 2016, the office has formally adjudicated more than 600 disputes.

The residential tenancies office provides information about the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* and regulations, as well as legally binding dispute resolution, when disputes arise that cannot be resolved by landlords and tenants.

Decisions are issued by the office in a timely manner, as I said earlier, and orders are enforceable in the Yukon Supreme Court. Minimum rental standards came into effect on January 1, 2017. The residential tenancies office enforces these important health and safety standards for Yukoners living in rental housing.

Educating the public is a key function of the office, as it helps prevent disputes. In 2020-21, the residential tenancies office responded to hundreds of inquiries that were fairly evenly split between both landlords and tenants. Common questions relate to issues such as security deposits, tenancy agreements, repairs, and rules on rent payments.

The *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* provides a binding dispute resolution process that is designed to provide fair, expedient, and accessible dispute resolution for landlords and tenants. It requires written tenancy agreements, notice periods to end tenancies, and provides clarity for both landlords and tenants. Whenever possible, tenants and landlords are encouraged to work together to deal with disputes as they arise. The office is also available to provide mediated settlement through its dispute resolution process for all residential tenancies. The dispute resolution process gives both parties the certainty of legally binding decisions with significantly lower wait times than if the dispute went to court.

The office provides standard forms for tenancy agreements, condition inspections, and ending tenancies, both

in print and online, so that landlords and tenants have the information they need to conduct their business in compliance with the law.

Mobile home pad tenancies are covered by the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* as well. Tenants and landlords of mobile home pads are entitled to the same rights as those who rent apartments and houses, including assessing the dispute resolution services offered by the residential tenancies office.

I hope that goes some way to answering the member opposite's question, and I am happy to answer any subsidiary questions that the member may have.

Ms. White: I appreciate that the minister had an opportunity to read that briefing note about the residential tenancies office and the legislation, but it didn't come close to answering the question that I asked.

What I asked is: Once a decision is made, what kind of follow-up does the office have? So, through that binding arbitration that he referenced, a decision is made — what kind of follow-up happens from that office?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The residential tenancies office will serve the binding decision to both parties, so there is a binding decision issued to both parties. Precedent-setting cases, as I mentioned the other afternoon when we were talking about this issue, are published on the CanLII site so that the community has access to the precedents and will see the current caselaw — the decisions that the residential tenancies office have rendered. They can then use them to see whether or not they have already been applied. That information is available that way.

To answer the member opposite's question, the decision is issued to both parties. In precedent-setting circumstances, those decisions are posted to CanLII for the entire community to see.

Ms. White: I appreciate that answer from the minister as this time it was in the realm of what I was asking, so I appreciate that — referencing CanLII, where he says the precedent-setting decisions are published so that people can see.

The question is this: What follow-up exists? For example, if I'm on the CanLII website like I am right now and I am looking at a decision, for example, that affects 280 tenants — in this case, a mobile home park — the decision says that there is no legal requirement for a tenant to sign a new tenancy agreement with the landlord. How does the office follow up? How do we make sure that every tenant in that park understands that they cannot be forced to sign a new lease and make sure that it is following the decision that was decided by that office?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the question.

She is referring to a recent decision that came out of the residential tenancies office that pertains to the actions of a landlord that affects many residents of an area. The complaint came forward from an individual.

The residential tenancies office considers every complaint as unique, so they deal with every complaint they receive on an individual basis. In this case, though, the incident does apply to a much broader range of people. I guess that what the member opposite is probably getting at is that, if people don't come forward and complain or they don't do this, they may not know what is happening in their rental development.

It is a good question. Certainly, in these days of rental shortages, we have to look at this in a more holistic way and we will deal with the department to find a way to better transmit these decisions to the public in these cases, because in certain circumstances, it does affect a lot more people.

To the member opposite's point, we could do a better job broadcasting the implications of that one tenant's complaint to the broader whole. In many cases, it may be on a one-on-one basis and we don't do that, but this is a much broader situation. I will talk with my officials and find a way to broadcast these decisions in these circumstances in a much broader way.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. Indeed, he is correct. This time, when a decision is made and affects hundreds of people — in this case, it was signing a new lease that changed a set amount and therefore circumvented the rent increase. It affects hundreds of people. How do we make sure — and how does the office follow up to make sure — that the landlord has followed the obligation, which is that the landlord must communicate with all tenants regarding proposed tenancy agreements? What is the follow-up? That is the question. I appreciate that, and I look forward to hearing back from him either in this capacity or by other means.

I did appreciate it when the minister shared fire coverage across the territory with all those numbers. Although it sounds large with 263 volunteers and 41 employees, it does leave some communities without. I have questions around fire services in Destruction Bay. Sadly, a home in Destruction Bay burned to the ground on Friday. This home is 50 feet from an empty fire station. The fire truck had to come from Burwash Landing, and the firefighters nearly had the fire out when they had to return to Burwash to refill the water tank. It was nearly an hour before they arrived back at the scene.

This is not a criticism to the volunteer firefighters out of Burwash Landing and this isn't a criticism of the folks in Destruction Bay, because everyone did the best that they could.

In a community like this, with 16.5 km between Burwash and Destruction Bay — understanding that the volunteers are coming from Burwash Landing and it is my understanding that Destruction Bay used to have a fire station — is there any capability for the volunteer firefighters from Burwash Landing to fill up their fire trucks in Destruction Bay?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the question this afternoon. It ties to many of the things that we have been talking about — about tragedy, about sustaining volunteer fire and emergency personnel in these tiny communities that we have scattered across the territory. It also speaks to the good neighbour practices that we see throughout the territory — as communities that see friends, relatives, and neighbours in nearby communities in a time of need — they rush and try to protect as they can. It touches on all of those themes that we have spoken about this afternoon.

The question is a seemingly simple one: Can the firefighters coming into Destruction Bay fill up their truck there? Frankly, I don't have an answer for my good colleague across the way.

What I can say this afternoon is that we have had, as I mentioned, a review of fire services throughout the territory.

The individual has conducted this review to try to address this very subject, which is: How do we satisfy the need to provide these fire protection services in these very small communities that just do not have enough of a volunteer base to provide the service themselves in a more formal way?

That review is well underway. It's actually in the final stages of development. It will have, I imagine, some of the answers to some of these vexing questions that we have around providing essential services to very, very small communities — places like Destruction Bay, places like Keno — and I look forward to seeing the recommendations contained therein.

I can't get ahead of what those recommendations will be, but I, like many in the territory, are very anxious to see these recommendations and actually get them before the Yukon public.

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Chair (Ms. Blake): Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Ms. White: I thank the minister for his previous answer, but it didn't actually answer the question, so I asked if there was a possibility for the Burwash Landing fire truck to be filled up with water in Destruction Bay. He said that the review is ongoing and maybe we would find out those answers.

I will draw a similarity to the fires in Keno. The fire truck came from Mayo to respond to the fire in Keno and ran out of water. That would be much longer than just an hour return trip to go back to Mayo and come back. In some cases, when we are talking about depending on the neighbourliness between Yukon communities, it might be helpful if Yukon government also played a role in that, which is to ensure that there was access to water in those communities that didn't have the volunteers. I know that it is a complicated issue and I will just put it out there for the minister and his department in hopes that, at some point, we will hear back that this is being worked on.

When the minister referenced jurisdictions and whether they had volunteer firefighters instances, or paid firefighters, one that really stood out for me was Old Crow. As we all know, Old Crow is a fly-in community with a couple hundred citizens, but to the best of my knowledge, right now, Old Crow doesn't have any kind of fire response. I don't think that there is an alarm system, so if an alarm was to go off — if it could go off — who would respond?

One of the reasons why this is an important issue is that we have put in a recreation centre that hasn't opened; we're putting in a new health centre; we're putting in a seniors complex and

10 additional units, so does the minister have any thoughts about the fire situation in Old Crow and possible solutions?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the question this afternoon. I have a response for the member opposite, when it comes to the residential tenancies office. I think that it's important that I get that on the record this afternoon. Ask and ye shall receive.

We were talking about a certain situation that arose with a multi-unit rental property and a decision coming down. One of the requirements made by the residential tenancies office is that every tenant has to be advised of this ruling. A contact number was provided so that they could get in touch if they had any concerns or follow-up. That notice did go out on the heels of the decision. When I was reading and getting briefed on this package, I did see that notification going out. I should have brought it up in my answer, but I verified with the department that this notice did go out to every tenant in that rental complex, so they were followed up on. They have avenues to complain, or to follow up with the office, if the landlord does not follow through with the order that was given. I just wanted to make that point this afternoon that, in this case, that did happen.

As I mentioned in my previous response, in many cases, it's one tenant and one landlord. In this case, it was one landlord and several tenants. There was follow-up through the office to make sure that they had an avenue to know about the decision, what it meant, and what the implications of that decision were — just so that is clear. I thank you for the Chamber's indulgence to provide that answer, Madam Chair.

We are on volunteer fire departments and Old Crow. I share the member opposite's concern. We have several communities in the territory that currently do not have any fire volunteers — Mendenhall, Old Crow, Pelly Crossing, Ross River, Destruction Bay, and Keno among them.

Like I was saying, Pelly Crossing, a self-governing First Nation, is currently in a process of reviewing its provision of fire services, is working to get that up and running, and is working to obtain more volunteers. Old Crow, as a self-governing First Nation, has that option as well. The independent review I referenced earlier, I suggest, will have some recommendations regarding self-governing First Nations and fire services in those self-governing First Nations.

There is also a deputy fire marshal assigned to work with Old Crow to find solutions for establishing a fire service, for recruitment, and for training. I believe, as does the department, that there is a significant opportunity to partner with a self-governing First Nation to provide these services in self-governing First Nation communities. I look forward to working on this file going forward, because it is important. I do know that the independent review I have spoken about a few times this afternoon will have recommendations that will help with communities that don't have any fire volunteers at the moment.

As to the member opposite, we did talk about Destruction Bay and whether the truck can refill their truck in that community. As I said, I don't know, and I will look into that for the member opposite. The independent fire review will have other recommendations. Maybe that's one of them. I'm just not sure what facilities there are in Destruction Bay to be able to

fill a truck like that, how long it would take, where — so, I just don't have those details on the floor of the House this afternoon, but if I receive them in the next hour or so, I will pass them along. If not, I'll get back to the member opposite on that issue.

Ms. White: I do appreciate that. Just in reference to Old Crow, the Yukon government built the new community centre that, in my understanding, was supposed to open up earlier this year. Has that community centre opened? If not, why not, and when is that expected opening day?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have a few things to say about community infrastructure projects this afternoon. Old Crow will be touched by these remarks, because we have advanced nearly 100 community infrastructure projects across the territory since 2016, valued at more than \$690 million in shared investment by the Yukon government and Canada. Canada contributed approximately \$488 million of that total, and we are very appreciative of that support here in the territory under the Investing in Canada infrastructure program.

Community infrastructure is the backbone of our modern lives. I don't think I have to put too fine a point to that. It provides water, sewer, and other municipal services used by Yukoners every day. Community infrastructure also includes public service spaces for gatherings and recreation that enable Yukoners to live healthy and active lives. We do our best to meet the needs of communities, recognizing the infrastructure gap and that desires far exceed the funding available.

As we advance priorities, we are also working with our federal colleagues to maximize contributions to the Yukon with as flexible terms as possible to better meet community and territory-wide priorities. We are working.

It is the communities that identify the priorities they have for infrastructure to us. That has been the process that my colleague undertook, travelling extensively throughout the territory — a remarkable achievement in and of itself — and asking those communities to please put forward their priorities — what they would like to see in terms of infrastructure — and then Community Services and the Government of Yukon have worked and done everything we can to follow up and follow through on the municipal priorities that they have put before us.

As for the Old Crow community centre, we are currently in the process of looking at and getting the status of that project. My understanding is — and we are trying to verify that right now — that it might be a transfer payment agreement with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, which means that we transferred the money — they put their priorities forward and this was one of their priorities. We may have transferred that money to the First Nation for them to procure the project.

So, the Old Crow community centre building replacement was a transfer payment agreement with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. It is \$14.5 million. As the First Nation is going through and actually doing the project on its behalf, I don't have insight into what the status of that project is at the moment, but I will look into that with my officials and will get back to the member opposite.

Ms. White: Along the same lines, what about the status on the update of the Carmacks community arena?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As members will know, the contractor that started that project abandoned it, and so construction has resumed on the project. I believe that it's Ketz Construction that is proceeding with that. We're looking for more details there.

The anticipated completion of that project is the fall of 2022. Legal action is underway with the original contractor, which was Scott Design Build, but this will not affect the current completion timelines of the project. We're going ahead with it, and then we will work on the legal side to reclaim as much money as we can from the original contract holder.

That project currently has resumed. We anticipate the completion in the fall of 2022.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that response. It's not very often that we have — well, I mean it is often that we have ministers responsible for multiple departments, but not always often that we have a minister responsible for two departments where they kind of cross-pollinate.

Is the minister aware of, within his department — so, within Wildland Fire Management. As folks in the Chamber know, I have been talking a lot about presumptive coverage for wildland forest firefighters. Does the minister know how his own department — Wildland Fire Management — feels about coverage for wildland forest firefighters?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yes, there is an aligning of the departments that we haven't seen for a long time. Basically, it is the creation of a de facto labour minister who has the responsibility for Community Services and all the EMS and fire protection services and all the rest of it and Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. There is a very good synergy here. I recognize it, and I am happy to see the member opposite acknowledge it as well.

I don't have my officials here from workers' compensation this afternoon, but that is okay because I have some experience there and have spoken to the president about workers' compensation and I have, of course, been working with Wildland Fire Management over the last several months on several fronts as they fought fires in this season as well as they fought fires in BC. They also provided much-needed flood response throughout the Southern Lakes in addition to everything else they were doing.

I know that, within the department, I have not had, from the Wildland Fire folks, any recommendation that they get a presumption for the urban poisons, toxins, and fumes that firefighters in municipalities and communities face. Wildland fire in the territory is different from some of the other provincial models. They are fighting fires almost solely in the bush, and they are breathing a lot of wood smoke and a lot of smoke from the burning of our boreal forest when they are out in their camps and fighting fires, but they are not tasked with fighting fires in municipal areas as some of our provincial wildland firefighters are.

In the territory, were they to, for some reason, come across fighting fires in a dumpsite or something that may have been taken over by fires, that would be chronicled and it would give them cause to be considered for other cancers.

The key here, as always, is that we try to follow the science and try to follow the evidence. Currently, the evidence states that our wildland firefighters are not exposed to the same types, the same fires, as you would find in an urban or municipal environment, so that is one of the reasons why we have the exception.

In working with Wildland Fire, I have never heard the recommendation that we include them in the presumption for these cancers the member opposite was talking about for first responders, although I have heard that Yukon's wildland firefighters are likely to encounter stressful situations that could have long-term impacts on their well-being.

Wildland Fire Management delivers cutting-edge mental resiliency training for firefighters and supervisors, helping crews recognize the signs of struggling mental health in themselves and their peers, and the training provides our staff with the tools and confidence to reach out and support each other through difficult times. So, we do hear about workplace safety issues in Wildland Fire, and that is the one that has been identified by many in the corps as a pressing matter, and we are providing, and stepping up to provide, that training and the recommendations there as well with the cancer presumption in WCB.

We recognize the invaluable contribution of every Yukoner who fights fires, whether full time or part time, professionally or as a volunteer. Under the existing *Workers' Compensation Act*, 10 cancers are presumed to be work-related for firefighters with the required use of services — not wildland fire, but the others.

During the public engagement commissioned by this government, we heard that Yukoners would like to see additional cancers included in the firefighter cancer presumption. The new act, which is now currently the most progressive act in the country, will add nine cancers to the list under the presumption, including pancreatic and thyroid. This latter recognizes the increasing role that women are taking on in fighting fires, because there are some cancers that are experienced by women that are captured by that presumption.

As I said, there are two different types of firefighter here: There is the one who works in the municipal environment and the one who works in the environment — in the wild — and those ones are not exposed to the same toxins as the other firefighters. Now, I have asked the department — the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board — to examine the cost implications of adding a presumption to the wildland firefighting teams. That work is ongoing, and I expect it fairly soon. The actuaries are working on that. It would actually lead to rate increases, not only to the government, but also to one of the rate groups. I believe that it is "Resources and transportation low" — and the implications to that rate group would be quite extensive were this presumption to be added into the rate base. That would lead to increased rates immediately, because the presumption to long-term illness has to be booked according to actuarial rules right out of the hop, or so I'm led to believe.

I am currently looking at the implications for that addition into the act that is before this House at the moment. Again, the cost of that is currently estimated — the initial estimate is in the

millions of dollars and would have quite a substantial increase to one of the rate groups, as well as government. What we have to balance here is whether the evidence supports doing that, because we do have full-time, part-time, volunteer — and wildland firefighters are entitled to compensation benefits if they suffer a cardiac arrest while participating in an emergency response or within 24 hours of the end of actively participating in an emergency response.

In talking to my colleague across the floor and bringing up the presumptions that have been bestowed upon wildland firefighters in BC, one of the things that they were looking for was the presumption for cardiac. That actually is captured in the territory for wildland firefighters. The other thing that is captured for wildland firefighters in the territory is the PTSD presumption. Again, they are, like all employees, captured in that, which was something bestowed upon BC wildland firefighters, and it is actually already in effect and cued up to become the norm here in the territory as well.

Wildland firefighters in Yukon are not typically exposed to burning manufactured materials that structural firefighters deal with. The International Association of Fire Fighters has raised concerns that these manufactured materials specifically release significant amounts of carcinogenic materials when they burn, thereby increasing the cancer risk. That is why those firefighters are captured and our wildland firefighters are not — because they are not seen to be exposed.

That doesn't mean that, under a presumption, a wildland firefighter — were they to develop a cancer in later years and had the terms of service and had potential exposures to these carcinogens and toxins — would not get WCB; it is quite the opposite. If they were exposed to these things, they could actually get coverage for their cancer treatment in the future. The presumption just basically skips the whole assessment process that a wildland firefighter would have to go through if they develop pancreatic cancer in later life. But that doesn't mean to say they would not be covered under the WCB legislation. It just means that they would have to go through an assessment based on what their exposure was. That's also an important piece.

There wasn't an awful lot of discussion about this in the act modernization consultation process. We asked the board to engage the public on the government's behalf in regard to modernizing and amalgamating these two pieces of legislation. Multiple channels were available for all Yukoners to provide feedback and input, including local public meetings, community visits, online surveys, written submissions, targeted stakeholder meetings, and opportunities for one-on-one sessions with board staff. The "what we heard" document was released on August 20 and is available on the Engage Yukon website. The engagement process was an opportunity for all Yukoners to influence and enhance the future of workplace safety and compensation in the Yukon for years to come.

Information related to this modernization consultation was made available to all Yukoners on the website. Advertisements ran in the *Whitehorse Star* and the *Yukon News*, and radio ads were heard on CKRW and CHON FM. The consultation closed on January 16, 2020. Advertisements were published on social

media platforms such as Facebook. Stakeholders and the general public were invited to provide input during the engagement process through several channels. A public open house was held in Whitehorse on October 23. Three outreach events were held in Whitehorse on November 6, 16, and 27, 2019. There were community visits in Haines Junction on November 5, Watson Lake on November 20, Mayo on December 2, and Dawson on December 3. Written submissions could be e-mailed or dropped off at the workers' compensation office. Verbal input could be given through a phone number. Two online surveys were published in French and English. There were 10 external advisory group meetings made up of representatives from government agencies, community organizations, and stakeholder groups representing workers and employers on October 13 and 31, November 14 and 28, and December 11 and January 16 — the date is off here, but I believe it was 2019. Workers' compensation heard from several individuals and groups outside of the public and stakeholder meetings who brought forward issues of specific concern to them. These submissions were included in the "what we heard" report. The number of people actually asking for the presumption to include wildland fires was slim to negligible.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that diatribe. I am hopeful that it means that he will be calling back the workers' compensation legislation. The question that I asked is: Has the minister had conversations with his own department, within Wildland Fire Management, as to their feelings about it? That is the question I asked. I'm not sure if I will get a different response, so I will try again: Has the minister had conversations within Wildland Fire Management about coverage for forest firefighters?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have had lots of discussions with Wildland Fire over the last months. I have not heard the presumption for wildland firefighters brought up in any of those conversations.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that short response.

It seems to be going super well for my questions today, so I am going to follow up on something the minister and I spoke about last on October 28, which is the proposed changes that have been tabled but not brought forward for any sort of conversation. Those are the changes to the *Municipal Act* and the *Assessment and Taxation Act*. The last time we were up, I had asked the minister different questions about that. One question that I have right now is: Has, at any point in time, the Department of Community Services looked at other programs to run a building retrofit program? Have they looked at any other avenues?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: My predecessor is not here right now, but I have spoken to him on several occasions. I have actually been party to discussions we have had. Yes, the Department of Community Services and the Yukon Housing Corporation have looked at alternatives to delivering the program this way, and we have communicated it as such to municipalities. I have done that myself. I know that my colleague has also spoken to them about this. There was a very lengthy process of analysis about how to best deliver this

program that would see our greenhouse gas emissions drop by 12 kilotonnes as outlined in *Our Clean Future*.

It is an important piece of our reduction targets. It will make housing more affordable for Yukoners, and it will also help our economy, as many people in the United States, the president included, is talking about how adaptation to climate change is actually a positive for the community. This is one great example of that.

We did look at Yukon Housing Corporation as an alternative. I think that this is where municipalities have, in conversations with me, consistently asked if we could deliver the program through Yukon Housing Corporation. We did look at that.

The short answer is that it is not a good option for Yukoners or the Government of Yukon for many reasons. For one thing, the most important part is that delivering the program through the Yukon Housing Corporation — the corporations would have to offer a personal loan to the person applying to the program. As I have discussed with the member opposite — as we have had this discussion — that would, first of all, increase the interest rate at which the loan can be offered right off the hop. We are looking at an interest rate of the Government of Canada lending rate plus 2.25 percent — I think that is what they had to do to deliver the program that way. Immediately, instead of seeing loans that would currently be 0.25 percent — some of the cheapest money in the country — Yukoners would have to go through Yukon Housing Corporation for a personal loan because it is a personal loan and not tied to a property in any way, shape, or form. The interest rate then goes higher, and the whole process changes. Then you are forced to give people loans at a much higher interest rate.

The other piece is that, because it's a personal loan, people would be less willing to take it on. Not only is it a higher interest rate, which puts in some impediments and makes it less affordable for people, but it also then means that, if you are thinking of selling your property in a couple of years, you may not want to be saddled with a loan like this, as opposed to tying it to your property and having it paid off over 15 years through an assessment to your property, as is currently the process through the well program and the rural electrification. Municipalities have stepped up to do these programs in the past, and so there is an understanding about how it would work.

The answer to the question, as I have said — as the member opposite and I have had these conversations before — is that, yes, the Department of Community Services and the Yukon Housing Corporation have explored other avenues to deliver this program and have discovered that, through that very thorough analysis, the best way to deliver this program is with municipalities through a local improvement charge. It makes interest rates lower, it ties the loan to the property, it transfers with the property, and it will allow the Yukon government — with these amendments that we are putting forward — to deliver this program in unincorporated rural communities next summer, at the very least. With any luck, some of the municipalities will also opt to sign on to this program and then expand the program so that we can actually get to 2,000 homes made far more efficient, saving their owners money, cutting our

greenhouse gas emissions, and helping our economy with the cheapest money in the country.

Ms. White: I am hopeful that the minister has gotten municipalities to sign on, unlike recently when we heard from AYC that they still weren't in support — the City of Whitehorse before the last municipal election. Then, hopefully when he gets communities onside, he will share that information with all members of the House.

Speaking of sharing information, the minister mentioned seeing the RTO decision and the notification that was sent out to tenants in that mobile home park, and I'm hoping that the minister can share a copy of that with me. So, I am just asking for confirmation that the minister will share what was sent out as a notification about the RTO decision.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am happy to share the notification.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services?

Seeing none, we will proceed to line-by-line debate.

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 51, Department of Community Services, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 51, Department of Community Services, cleared or carried

Chair: The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 51, Department of Community Services, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$12,896,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures underexpenditure in the amount of \$2,280,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$10,616,000 agreed to

Department of Community Services agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Ms. White: Madam Chair, is it possible to recess for only five minutes, just due to the time of the day?

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for five minutes.

Recess

Chair: Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Highways and Public Works

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the opportunity to speak on the Highways and Public Works supplementary budget request for fiscal year 2021-22. I would like to introduce my officials. To my left, we have Sherri Young, and to my right, Deputy Minister Paul McConnell.

I have a few comments and certainly understand that there will be further discussion in future days.

I would like to highlight a few matters in relation to Highways and Public Works and also highlight the budgetary requests for which Highways and Public Works is coming to the Legislative Assembly to seek spending authority.

First, I would like to talk about the First Nations procurement policy that our government implemented in full on October 4 of this year. Over a period of nine months, the industry working group was established to provide a forum for interested stakeholders to voice their input as tools and processes were developed to support the implementation of this policy.

I would like to thank the stakeholders who attended these meetings. The discussions that took place contributed to the way we designed the modern review committee, bid value reductions, the process of First Nation business verification, as well as other operational requirements that will contribute to the success of this policy. Consultation on the policy and legislation changes can be challenging, and, in fact, on certain files, it can be more than just focusing on technical aspects.

A stakeholder might ask: Why is a First Nation procurement policy required? Is my current business responsible for past injustices? I would respond that, broadly, indigenous people have been excluded from the prosperity that has resulted from modern Canadian nation-building, and most of them still are. This is about historic reparation and we are attempting to fix the relationship going forward.

Reconciliation has many facets. It is ceremony, it is justice, but arguably it is also creating favourable circumstances to boost economic growth for a segment of the population that has been historically excluded, marginalized, and oppressed. As society and as a government, we have decided to move in the direction of reconciliation, and we are taking concrete steps to get there.

In mid-September, I travelled to Dawson City on the traditional territory of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. On my way up the north Klondike Highway, I saw the national trade corridors fund resources being deployed impressively on various projects along the road. We are upgrading critical sections of the north Klondike Highway over the next decade. These construction projects will increase safety, improve driving conditions, and better connect the Yukon. These road sections will be constructed to a higher standard and will increase the resilience

of the highway to climate change consequences by installing erosion control and oversize culverts as we face increased variability in precipitation, runoff, and intermittent permafrost.

If you drove up to Dawson this summer, you will have seen that we are rehabilitating bridges such as the structure at Moose Creek, as well as replacing others such as the previously suboptimal approach at Crooked Creek, situated just south of Stewart Crossing.

In total, we aim to reconstruct 209 kilometres of the north Klondike Highway through this funding envelope over the course of this decade. With the thawing permafrost in some of these sections, these are indeed major undertakings as we attempt to rehabilitate our road infrastructure to maximize climate resilience.

Speaking of major undertakings, accompanied by my Highways and Public Works officials, I witnessed and learned details on the construction of the Dempster fibre line. I was very impressed by the progress made so far and, in particular, the lack of obvious impact of the already placed fibre line along the Dempster Highway right-of-way.

There are certainly challenges ahead, including a number of significant tunnelling stretches under creeks and rivers, including the mighty Mackenzie River.

Also on the north highway crossing, in the Stewart Crossing to Dawson corridor, in the 1990s and 2000s when I was doing my once-every-two-months court circuits in Dawson, I recall some of the sections. There was thick vegetation — almost tunnel-like — with an almost natural canopy of deciduous leaves greeting motorists. Today, our planned annual extensive brushing schedule, combined with our road traffic volume classification system, attempts to ensure that the high- and relatively high-volume portions of our 5,000-plus kilometre road infrastructure are cleared and brushed with predictable regularity in order to make best efforts to ensure the safety of the Yukon driving public.

I want to commend the department for moving swiftly on the requests made from Yukoners on specific brushing areas of safety concern and of potholes of significance. Some alerts came directly to my office, and some came helpfully from colleagues from across the floor.

I also recall, in the first few weeks of me being in this position, that there were a number of washouts that had to be dealt with expertly by the skilled staff and employees of Highways and Public Works. In certain areas, we also face the invasive plant species, specifically sweet clover, that have made the need for brushing in some segments more frequent.

I am now pleased to speak specifically about the Department of Highways and Public Works supplementary budget for the 2021-22 fiscal year. The Department of Highways and Public Works is responsible for public roads throughout the territory — their construction, maintenance, and the clearing of the rights-of-way.

Also, the department supports the rest of government through a centralized network by sourcing office supplies and by providing assistance with fleet vehicles, printing, publishing, procurement, mail delivery, and government travel. On top of that, Highways and Public Works manages and

maintains 28 airports and aerodromes, along with roughly 500 buildings and facilities such as schools and office spaces. With all of these tasks to manage, we must be strategic and make prudent choices with spending so that we can provide the best possible service to Yukoners.

Despite a high level of care and attention, it is nearly impossible to predict everything that happens in a year, particularly this year with historically excessive melt from record snowfalls in the southern Yukon, as well as the ongoing pandemic response, which commenced, as we all know, in March 2020.

The total supplementary budget for Highways and Public Works is an increase of \$8,776,000. Of that amount, \$5,256,000 is recoverable from Canada. I would like to give more detail about the highlights of the supplementary budget.

As members of this House will know, this year we experienced unusual weather events, some of which were, in fact, record-breaking. In fact, in early April, the amount of snow on the ground in certain areas of southern Yukon was nearly 300 percent above normal. When the snow melted, it caused a number of road washouts; therefore, a \$1.5-million increase to the department's budget was needed to repair emergency road washouts, ensuring that our highways were safe and accessible for Yukoners. This is just one example of how unanticipated weather events can significantly impact the department's budget and require additional resources.

Equally important to responding to emergency transportation issues is ensuring that the department has the right equipment to keep the Yukon highway network operational. This equipment is vital to ensuring that Yukoners can access reliable transportation links that get them where they need to go. To meet equipment replacement cost increases, we were required to increase the road and airport equipment revolving fund by \$1.3 million. As well, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to affect our spending this fiscal year. This year, we saw a \$5.2-million increase to continue supporting the Yukon aviation industry, which is 100-percent recoverable from Canada; 12 aviation companies benefitted from this funding, as this sector has predictably been among the hardest hit during the COVID-19 global pandemic. We hear anecdotally that our aviation sector has shown some promising signs of recovery this past summer, but our government certainly recognizes that there is still ground to make up in order to reach pre-pandemic levels.

As well, Highways and Public Works has also contributed \$300,000 toward the contract for the COVID-19 call centre, which allowed Yukoners to access comprehensive and accurate information.

Lastly, we increased our budget by \$220,000 to support additional cleaning measures for schools to make sure that our students are, and continue to be, kept safe during the global pandemic.

We are committed to meeting the needs of Yukoners while responding to external spending pressures and balancing those pressures with our plans in a fiscally responsible manner. Moving forward, the Department of Highways and Public Works will continue the vital work of keeping our

transportation systems moving, our information flowing, and our buildings running safely and reliably all year long.

I want to conclude my comments by thanking the hard-working, dedicated, and creative individuals at the Department of Highways and Public Works. It is an honour to serve as their minister.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for his opening remarks and welcome his officials as well.

I just wanted to start with some questions about a news release that went out today regarding the Yukon Resource Gateway program and the awarding of the Carmacks bypass project at \$29.6 million, according to the news release.

There will be a series of questions on this, but when I look at his mandate letter, on page 3, it says that the minister has a leadership role in ensuring that the commitments under *Our Clean Future* are realized, including — the second bullet down — conducting climate risk assessments of all major transportation infrastructure projects above \$10 million that are built or funded by the Government of Yukon. Clearly, this Yukon Resource Gateway project falls into that category.

I know that we are running short on time here today, but I'm curious if the minister can provide us with details of that climate risk assessment, when it was done, and what the results were.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: In the spring of 2019, a project agreement for the Carmacks bypass component was signed by the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. The project includes construction of a new road and bridge that will allow industrial vehicles to bypass the community of Carmacks, creating an enhanced and safer flow of traffic for residents. It will also improve access to mining activities while enabling the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation to benefit from contracting, education, and training benefits associated with the project.

As the member opposite will know, on November 8, 2021, Pelly Construction was awarded the \$29.6-million contract to construct the new road and bridge. This project is a key component under the Yukon Resource Gateway program and a collaborative effort between the Yukon government and the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. Right-of-way clearing began in 2020, and the project is still anticipated to be complete in 2024.

I certainly hear the member opposite's question with respect to the climate risk analysis. I have a not insignificant note that I will get into, likely tomorrow, with respect to Highways and Public Works' response to *Our Clean Future*. I will certainly provide some additional information with respect to that specific question, but certainly all of the projects that are being considered now with respect to road building, Resource Gateway, and the national trade corridors fund will all have a climate lens with respect to climate resilience, creating stronger infrastructure in the roads so that there is greater resilience both to intermittent permafrost and upgrading as much of the north Klondike Highway to the BST-3 standard to allow for more significant loads in the spring breakup season, among others.

As stated, I have a lot of notes on the climate resilience piece that I will continue to share with the House, likely as early as tomorrow.

Madam Chair, seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale North that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

May the House have a report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the House do now adjourn.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to

Speaker: This House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following documents were filed November 8, 2021:

35-1-15

Nasal Naloxone, letter re (dated November 8, 2021) from Bronte Renwick-Shields, Executive Director, Blood Ties Four Directions Centre, Peter Johnston, Grand Chief, Council of Yukon First Nations, Kristina Craig, Executive Director, Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, Kate Mechan, Executive Director, Safe at Home Society Yukon, Aja Mason, Executive Director, Yukon Status of Women Council, Barbara McInerney, Executive Director, Women's Transition Home, Jillian Hardie, Executive Director, Challenge Disability Resource Group, Véronique Maggiore, Interim Executive Director, Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, and Dave Blottner, Executive Director, Food Bank Society of

Whitehorse, to Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Health and Social Services (White)

35-1-16

COVID-19 elementary school measures, letter re (dated November 7, 2021) from Fraser Pearce and parents of elementary school children to Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Health and Social Services, Kate White, Leader of the Third Party, Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge, Scott Kent, Member for Copperbelt South, and Annie Blake, Member for Vuntut Gwitchin (White)

Written notice was given of the following motions November 8, 2021:

Motion No. 200

Re: Naloxone nasal spray (White)

Motion No. 201

Re: public inquiry into the handling of the sexual assaults at Hidden Valley Elementary School (Dixon)

Motion No. 202

Re: making information from the chief medical officer of health public (Cathers)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 29

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, November 9, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier Government House Leader* Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
Hon. Nils Clarke	Riverdale North	Minister of Highways and Public Works; Environment
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Government House Leader* Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Minister of Economic Development; Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Jeanie McLean	Mountainview	Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

Currie Dixon	Leader of the Official Opposition Copperbelt North	Scott Kent	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Yvonne Clarke	Porter Creek Centre	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Emily Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Annie Blake	Vuntut Gwitchin

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

*Government House Leader: Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee to November 4, 2021; Hon. John Streicker from November 5, 2021

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, November 9, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.
 At this time, we will proceed with prayers.

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will proceed at this time with the Order Paper.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, can we please welcome to the gallery today — s’il vous plaît, pouvons-nous accueillir — Leslie Larbalestrier et son mari, Philippe Grégoire; Jocelyne Isabelle, directrice de la Garderie du petit cheval blanc; Laurie Trotter, avec *L’Aurore boréale*; Jean-Sébastien Blais, président, Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon; Gregory Torres, agent de projet en immigration; Isabelle Salesse, directrice générale, l’Association franco-yukonnaise; Manon Moreau, sous-ministre de la Direction des services en français; André Bourcier, directeur de la Direction des services en français; Nancy Power, gestionnaire, communication et politique de la Direction des services en français.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Clarke: For the Porcupine caribou herd tribute, we have the Deputy Minister of Environment, Manon Moreau, who is wearing two hats today, and Christine Cleghorn.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of National Francophone Immigration Week

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Monsieur le Président, le Yukon est la troisième juridiction la plus bilingue du Canada. Cela nous fait une destination très attirante pour les immigrants francophones. Je prends la parole aujourd’hui pour souligner la neuvième édition de la Semaine nationale de l’immigration francophone. Ayant pour thème « Une francophonie aux mille saveurs », cet événement nous invite à célébrer la diversité autour de nous et à mieux connaître les autres.

C’est à l’occasion de cette semaine que je tiens à mentionner le travail d’une Yukonnaise remarquable, Madame Leslie Larbalestrier. Elle-même immigrante, Leslie a quitté sa Belgique natale pour s’installer au Yukon il y a plus de 15 ans. Elle a laissé sa marque dans de nombreux organismes francophones à Whitehorse au fil des ans. Leslie occupe aujourd’hui le poste d’adjointe à la direction à la Garderie du petit cheval blanc de Whitehorse, où elle continue de se démarquer par son ardeur au travail.

Dans le cadre de ses fonctions, Leslie participe chaque année au Forum Mobilité Destination Canada où elle accompagne des immigrants et immigrantes qui cherchent à s’installer au Yukon. Cet événement est l’une des stratégies gagnantes de la garderie pour recruter des professionnels et des étudiants en petite enfance qui se joindront à l’équipe de la garderie. Ses efforts permettent ainsi d’amener du personnel qualifié au Yukon, de combler des postes-clés dans la communauté et de renforcer la vitalité de la Franco-Yukonnie. Leslie tisse des liens avec ces futures immigrants et immigrantes et les appuie dans leurs démarches d’immigration, que ce soit pour obtenir un visa de travail ou pour remplir leurs documents d’immigration. Elle les prend également sous son aile dès leur arrivée au Yukon pour les aider à s’intégrer dans leur nouveau milieu de travail et au sein de la communauté. Ce soutien peut prendre plusieurs formes, comme faciliter la rencontre vers d’autres francophones pour les aider ou organiser des voyages de camping.

Leslie incarne parfaitement l’esprit de la Semaine nationale de l’immigration francophone. Elle favorise les échanges et encourage les Yukonnais et Yukonaises à se soutenir l’un l’autre. Je salue donc Leslie qui joue un rôle essentiel pour s’assurer que les familles ont accès aux services dont ils ont besoin et qui fait du Yukon un endroit où il fait bon vivre pour tous et toutes. Je vous invite à prendre part aux diverses activités organisées cette semaine par les organismes francophones.

Monsieur le Président, un grand merci au ministère du Développement économique et à l’AFY pour l’excellent travail qu’ils font pour soutenir l’immigration francophone.

Bonne Semaine de l’immigration francophone à tous et à toutes.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: Merci, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the importance of francophone immigration to Canada and between our provinces and territories. From November 7 to 13, we are celebrating the 9th edition of National Francophone Immigration Week.

This year’s theme is “The thousand flavours of la francophonie”, which is a nice reminder that we are all bound together by our different varieties of cuisine, but also by the many flavours of culture and tradition.

Since the 1800s, the franco-yukonnais have participated fully in the community, cultural, and economic life of the Yukon. They seek to improve the quality of life of all Yukoners while preserving their francophone culture. Early on, they had an active role in the social and political life of the territory, emerging from the time of the gold rush and continuing on to the present day. What started out as an initiative of new dedicated individuals quickly evolved into an energetic collective enterprise.

In 1979, francophones got together and formed the Association franco-yukonnaise — AFY. Officially incorporated in 1982, AFY is a one-stop shop that offers many

services in French, particularly in job search, reception, and integration of newcomers in training.

Over the years, francophones in the Yukon have set up a number of organizations to ensure the sustainability of their community. Today, these francophone organizations and institutions have contributed to the development of the Yukon. Each of these organizations creates jobs and offers a variety of services.

According to the Canada 2016 census, 1,575 residents of the Yukon identified as francophone. As we welcome new Yukoners every year, we are sure to see that this number has grown when 2021 numbers are released.

The francophone community has had such an incredible impact in the territory. Several Yukon employers have experimented with hiring employees through the Destination Canada Mobility Forum, which is held each year in France and Belgium.

We continue to see increasing interest from parents around French immersion enrolment. This is wonderful to see. Having a second language is an asset to anyone.

When I came to Canada 26 years ago, I hung out with the French community. I discovered that there are a lot of similarities in our cultures. This is where I learned my English with a French accent. I am proud of the diverse territory that the Yukon has grown to become. Every culture contributes so much to our social fabric. Let's build community through diversity.

Merci à tout le monde.

Applause

Ms. White: Merci, Monsieur le Président. Je suis heureuse de me lever aujourd'hui au nom du NPD du Yukon pour parler de la Semaine de l'immigration francophone.

La francophonie est une partie importante de la culture canadienne. Comme élève d'immersion française pendant toute ma scolarité, j'ai eu le plaisir d'apprendre tant de choses sur cette culture riche et diverse.

La francophonie du Canada comprend tant de provinces et de territoires, de pays d'origine, d'accents, de cultures, d'ethnicités, de religions, d'expériences et d'expressions. C'est la richesse de l'immigration et la richesse de notre propre pays qui se rencontrent.

La francophonie, ou la francophilie, se retrouve sur tous les continents.

Dans notre territoire, la Franco-Yukonnie est pleine de vitalité. Je suis fière de faire partie, même à titre d'invitée, de cette communauté.

La Semaine de l'immigration francophone nous rappelle aussi qu'il est important de continuer les discussions amorcées partout au Canada: les discussions sur les discriminations raciales, les oppressions, la — je suis en pratique, pardon, encore une fois — réconciliation avec les peuples autochtones. La francophonie Canadienne a son rôle à jouer pour bâtir un avenir inclusif pour toutes et pour tous.

Cette semaine est aussi l'opportunité de rendre hommages aux personnes immigrantes du Canada — les personnes francophones, mais aussi les personnes de toutes langues, et de

tout pays d'origine. Pas uniquement pour leur apport aux arts et à la culture, mais pour leur apport à l'économie, à l'éducation, à l'environnement, à la santé, à l'industrie et au tourisme, ou encore à la vitalité générale du territoire.

Merci, Monsieur.

Applause

In recognition of the Porcupine caribou herd

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise today to pay tribute to and acknowledge the efforts of our partners in the ongoing protection of the Porcupine caribou herd and its habitat. Caribou are an iconic northern species.

The Porcupine caribou herd is very healthy and is currently one of the largest caribou herds in the world. The Porcupine caribou herd's range covers over 250,000 square kilometres of northern tundra and taiga in Alaska, the Yukon, and Northwest Territories. The herd is ecologically and culturally important to the First Nation and Inuvialuit peoples across this region who have a connection to the caribou that spans millennia.

In northern communities, where the cost of healthy food can be a financial barrier, caribou is an essential food source. The last population survey in 2017 estimated the herd to be at 218,000 animals — the highest estimate since population monitoring began in the 1970s. The size of the herd is a testament to its healthy and abundant habitat and the strength of the co-management structure that the Government of Yukon is proud to be part of.

The herd is co-managed by the parties to the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement*, comprised of: the governments of Yukon, Canada, and Northwest Territories; the Inuvialuit Game Council; the Gwich'in Tribal Council; Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation; the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in; and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. Through the Porcupine Caribou Management Board, we work together to ensure that the herd will remain strong. Maintaining this collaborative relationship is important. I actually just met with the Porcupine Caribou Management Board on October 15, where we talked about the board's priorities, including integrating indigenous knowledge to inform management decisions.

Regular monitoring since the 1970s tells us that during their calving period, the herd is spread across the coastal plain of Alaska and the Yukon. Indigenous knowledge that dates much further back from the 1970s tells the same story.

Because the parties share harvest information, we have a very clear picture of what is happening with the herd and we are able to make management decisions based on strong information. In the Yukon, the herd's most sensitive habitat is protected from development by the Ivavik and Vuntut national parks and through treaties and government agreements for the Yukon North Slope and adjacent habitats.

In Alaska, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge has been an important conservation area. The herd's most critical calving grounds are located in the refuge. The Government of Yukon supports protection of the Porcupine caribou herd's critical calving and post-calving season grounds in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Partnerships and agreements with indigenous, territorial, state, and federal governments strengthen our ability to protect this important herd and its habitat. I would like to highlight the advocacy efforts of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and acknowledge the leadership of indigenous partners in gaining commitments from international banks to stop oil and gas development in the refuge. I would also like to thank Joe Tetlichy for his years of guidance and leadership as the chair of the Porcupine Caribou Management Board. Your commitment to caribou carries our work forward.

As a government, we continue to implement the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement* and *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* by contributing to Porcupine caribou herd management activities. We will work with all partners including the Porcupine Caribou Management Board, the International Porcupine Caribou Board, the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope), Government of Northwest Territories, Government of Canada, First Nations and Inuvialuit, the State of Alaska, and the United States of America. These partnerships have existed for decades and are essential for the continued conservation of this iconic herd and its habitat.

We must do all we can together to sustain this herd as the herd has sustained us for generations.

Applause

Ms. Blake: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP and the Yukon Party to pay tribute to the Porcupine caribou herd.

Each fall season, the Porcupine caribou make their way across the borders within the traditional territories of the Gwich'in Nation. The Gwich'in Nation represents one of the most northerly indigenous people living at the limits of the boreal forest. The Gwich'in Nation spans across the borders of the Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Alaska and includes 15 Gwich'in communities.

The Porcupine caribou herd is the heart of the Gwich'in culture and is our main staple of food year-round. The sacred connection between us, as a people, and the Porcupine caribou is thousands of years old. The Porcupine caribou herd continues to hold a strong presence within every aspect of the Gwich'in people's existence. Our deeply embedded connection is captured in the essence of our oral history. The caribou is a part of our lifeline from the time we are in our mother's womb until long after we are gone.

A sacred ceremony quietly unfolds when the caribou arrive within the traditional territory of the Vuntut Gwitchin. Stories are exchanged across kitchen tables about our ancestors' traditional teachings of depending on and respecting the caribou herd. Excitement fills the homes as men prepare for their hunt. Young boys help with excitement as they too prepare to hunt their first caribou and the women prepare their kitchens to work with a harvest that will soon be brought home. Every part of the caribou is used for food, tools, and clothing. The Porcupine caribou nourishes us as a people spiritually, keeps us connected to our lands, and sustains our culture while providing strength to us as a people. When there is no caribou for

extended periods, we feel it as a people. The Porcupine caribou herd is medicine to who we are as Gwich'in.

Our existence and ability to survive for thousands of years is interconnected with the Porcupine caribou herd. The Gwich'in Nation has worked tirelessly for the protection of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which is the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd. Legislative action is still needed to permanently protect these lands and our culture.

Each spring, the Porcupine caribou herd journeys to their calving grounds in the coastal plains of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which is also recognized by the Gwich'in as "Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit", which translates to "The Sacred Place Where Life Begins". The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge provides pristine wilderness, rich with the freshest waters, the greenest pastures, and vast open lands for animals and birds from all over the world to come and give birth to their young. The Gwich'in people continue to stand united to seek permanent protection of the birthing grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd to ensure sustainability of our culture and our way of life.

I urge the Yukon government to work with the Gwich'in in their efforts to seek permanent protection of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge with the Prime Minister of Canada and President Biden and his administration in the United States. Mahsi'.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further tributes?

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Ms. Blake: I have for tabling a letter from the Yukon Association for Birth Choices.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees? Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 4 — response

Hon. Ms. McPhee: In response to Petition No. 4 tabled in the House on October 26, 2021, I would first like to thank the community of Watson Lake and the over 527 supporters of the petition. We recognize that this is an important matter for the citizens of Watson Lake and the surrounding area, and I appreciate the opportunity to stand in the House today to speak to the petition.

The Department of Health and Social Services is committed to ensuring that Yukoners have access to supports to live safe, independent, and comfortable lives in their own homes or communities for as long as possible, regardless of age, income, or ability level. We are building on this work as we implement the actions laid out in the aging-in-place action plan, along with the complementary recommendations of the *Putting People First* final report.

A few examples of the significant work that we have undertaken related to the recommendations in the action plan include: development of a new rural, end-of-life care program

that will offer direct funding to Yukoners in rural communities who have a progressive, life-limiting illness and are at end of life; implementation of the Shine a Light on Dementia program to provide education and training to support caregivers; establishment of an aging-in-place seniors advisory committee; and increased options for virtual care.

We are keenly aware of the Yukon's aging population, with seniors being the fastest growing group across the territory in the past decade. We are looking ahead and planning for the future. As the population of the Yukon continues to grow, the need for long-term care services will naturally increase. Currently, in Watson Lake, the Department of Health and Social Services offers various services, including care coordination, home support services, community-based nursing, and regional therapy services through the home care program. The home care program works directly with clients and their loved ones to meet the individual's needs through a person-centred approach, wherein the person in the family is at the centre of decisions.

Yukon Housing has a seniors twelplex in Watson Lake, and Health and Social Services home care provides services to seniors living in that building based on individual needs. In the past five years, 14 individuals from Watson Lake have moved into long-term care homes. As of November 3, 2021, there are no individuals from Watson Lake waiting for an assessment for long-term care.

Although there are no plans for the construction of a long-term care home in Watson Lake at the moment, we are always watching for and acting on opportunities. We are also taking into account that long-term care homes are not the only solution for individuals to remain in their community. Other solutions may include in-home respite, enhanced staffing models, partnering with local organizations, day programming, Meals on Wheels, and exploring options with system partners. There may be options for further development across the continuum of care provided in the community.

We evaluate the demographics of communities across the territory with an eye toward the future as part of our commitment to support Yukoners today, tomorrow, and in the years to come. Together with the continued input from care professionals, system partners, municipal governments, First Nation governments, clients, their loved ones, and the community, we will continue to improve how Yukoners age in place.

I look forward to further conversation with the community to understand their needs and perspective as we move ahead with aging in place and *Putting People First* together.

Speaker: Are there any petitions to be presented?

Petition No. 3 — additional signatures presented

Mr. Cathers: I have today for presentation additional names on Petition No. 3, which, of course, is regarding Hidden Valley Elementary School. These signatures are all from the riding of Klondike.

Speaker: Are there any further petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the government to provide members of the Official Opposition and the Third Party the opportunity for regular COVID-19 briefings by the acting chief medical officer of health.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to return to issuing COVID-19 case update news releases every day during the state of emergency.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to show leadership and take steps to improve winter road conditions in southeast Yukon.

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Economic Development to review the criteria for the new economic development fund to address concerns in the business community surrounding market disruption and competitiveness.

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with downtown residents, businesses, shelter users, and other stakeholders to address the ongoing community concerns regarding the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter by developing the next phase of the community safety plan.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to incentivize midwifery in the Yukon by offering a competitive wage.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

State of emergency in Yukon

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Between Friday and Monday, the acting chief medical officer of health reported more than 80 cases of COVID-19. We now have more than 169 active cases in the Yukon. We also have widespread and untraceable community transmission in Whitehorse.

To respond to this deeply troubling COVID-19 surge — the Yukon's second wave — our government has declared a state of emergency under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. We took this action less than 20 hours after Cabinet received

the latest recommendations from the acting chief medical officer of health. If we have learned anything through the last 20 months of this pandemic, it is that we must listen to the best science from the public health professionals. We must put the health of the greater community before the self-interests of the few. None of us want to be here, but too many people are falling sick. Too many unvaccinated people are falling gravely ill.

Our medical system is being strained by this unprecedented spike in cases. Our territory is at risk, and we have to act quickly. Declaring a state of emergency allows our government to implement measures that have been recommended to decrease transmission and ensure that our health care system is not overwhelmed. These new measures include: mandatory masking; limits on personal gatherings, organized gatherings, seated ticketed events, and faith-based and cultural gatherings; and restrictions on restaurants, bars, nightclubs, gyms, fitness studios, and personal services. A more detailed list is online at yukon.ca.

All Yukoners should follow these new measures immediately. They will be enforced under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* as of November 13, which is Saturday, and will be in place until at least December 3, 2021. The acting chief medical officer of health will actively assess the COVID-19 risk in the territory and adjust recommendations as necessary.

We are also fast-tracking the proof of vaccination requirements for designated settings to align with the new recommendations. As of Saturday, you will be required to prove that you are fully vaccinated — two shots, Mr. Speaker — to access a designated setting. The list of designated settings is being finalized and will be made public this week.

The acting chief medical officer of health recommends that schools remain open with students wearing masks in all areas of the school, including classrooms, and that activities between schools be suspended until further notice. The acting chief medical officer of health is also recommending that travel between communities in the Yukon be avoided until further notice.

We know that these new measures are broad and will have significant impacts on Yukoners. That is precisely the point. We need to take swift and decisive action to stop the spread of COVID-19 in our territory. This is not easy, but it is necessary to protect the health and well-being of all Yukoners and maintain the capacity of our health care system. It is necessary to protect our families, our friends, and our neighbours across the Yukon. Each and every Yukoner has a role to play in keeping our communities safe. We know what that means. We are well-practised in this already. Follow the “safe six”, mask up, and please get vaccinated. The vaccines are safe and tested in millions of people worldwide, and they save lives. These steps work, Mr. Speaker. By taking them, you protect your friends, families, and neighbours.

Mr. Dixon: I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to respond to the ministerial statement. We share in the concern and disappointment that the minister has expressed with the dramatic rise in COVID case numbers in the Yukon. We are particularly concerned about the rising case numbers

among students in Yukon schools and the impact that this is having on classes. As such, we recognize that the government needs to act, and we support the restoration of the state of emergency to allow for the installation of new public health measures.

Our thoughts are with all Yukoners who are ill and those who are dealing with exposure notices, especially our youth.

It is truly unfortunate that we are back where we are. We strongly urge all Yukoners to follow the guidelines as set out by the acting chief medical officer of health, including practising the “safe six” and wearing a mask whenever you are in an indoor public place.

We also urge the government to make all recommendations and advice from the CMOH public. We would like the government to share more information and data about our current caseloads with Yukoners, as well as provide more frequent updates about the capacity of our hospitals and, in particular, ICU beds.

As a result of this announcement, many Yukoners have raised a number of questions about what this means for them. Those include what supports are in place for parents who have to stay home with kids who are missing school and what supports are in place for small businesses affected by the restrictions that have been put in place. Many businesses have told us that they are waiting for direction about how the proof of vaccination process will work and what it means for their staff.

According to the minister, businesses will require proof of vaccination starting on Saturday, and we are wondering how the government plans to communicate this new verification process to businesses and to the public. We are also wondering how the government ensures that health information is protected. For example, how are businesses required to collect and record this information?

We also wonder why the Liberal government is unwilling to utilize rapid tests in our schools as several other jurisdictions across the country are doing. Rapid testing would provide a quicker direction to parents who are wondering if they should send their child to school or if they have to stay home.

As always, we encourage Yukoners to follow the guidelines and rules put in place, and, of course, as always, we encourage all Yukoners who are eligible to get vaccinated.

Ms. White: The Yukon NDP thanks the House for this opportunity to reflect on the state of emergency that was declared at 7:32 p.m. last night. This time reflects the e-mail that I and others received to the order-in-council notification of this change.

Let me start by saying that the Yukon NDP supports these new measures, but we, like many others, wish that we hadn't gotten to this point of needing to declare an emergency.

For weeks, the Yukon NDP have asked questions about why the Yukon was, at first, one of only two jurisdictions in Canada without a mask mandate. As you know, when Manitoba finally changed the rules, we were the outlier — the only jurisdiction in the country that did not require the use of masks in public places. We had heard various answers and

explanations from various ministers as to why masks weren't mandatory. We were told that they were following the science and the recommendations of the CMOH, and often we were told that we were wrong.

It makes a person wonder why the science in the Yukon was so different from the science across the rest of the country, until we sadly skyrocketed past the rest of the country with the highest rates of new cases per capita anywhere in the country. We are relieved to know that masking has now been brought back. The minister has said that they responded to the latest recommendations from the CMOH in less than 20 hours. Is he saying that, prior to that, she had not made any recommendations for mask mandates or other restrictions? The problem, of course, is that, other than asking the minister, there is no way for us to know. The CMOH's public health recommendations should be public. Yukoners deserve to know what their CMOH is saying, so will this government commit to making the CMOH's recommendations public?

Meanwhile, it is up to this government to communicate about how the measures are going to work. Many businesses have questions about how they are supposed to validate a person's vaccine status and where they land on the designated settings list. They have questions about resources, and now, I guess, with the shorter timeline, they will have questions about additional help — all valid questions.

We have heard from parents urging the government to make rapid testing available in schools. We hope that, in the coming days, they will do just that because, as a parent said this morning on CBC, the government has a responsibility to protect children, and until they bring rapid testing to schools, they aren't doing enough. So, will rapid testing be available in Yukon schools?

As recipients of Yukon government funding, will daycares be required to ensure that all their staff are fully vaccinated, including boosters as these are made available?

Folks have been reaching out, asking about sports for both children and adults: what is allowed and what isn't, and when will that be communicated with Yukoners?

In order to help Yukoners better understand our current situation, many have been asking that more detailed data be made publicly available on the yukon.ca website, because most jurisdictions in Canada are publishing this data online, so it would facilitate cross-jurisdictional comparisons and help inform the decisions that Yukoners are being asked to make.

Will the government commit to publishing data that includes hospitalizations, ICU admissions, by vaccination status and age?

For the last 20 months, there has been one critical lesson that I hope we have all learned, and that is the importance of clear, concise communication, which brings me to my final point. Why was this important decision shared in an online press release at 7:42 p.m. on a Monday night? Why wasn't there a press conference held where media could ask questions, ensuring that these points would be shared on the radio, in print form, and online last night and first thing this morning? Until the next Yukon government press conference when media can

ask these important questions, Yukoners will be trying to fully understand last night's press release.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing answers to these questions from the minister in his response.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and in response, I want to thank the Leader of the Official Opposition this afternoon for his support of the state of emergency. It comes as a welcome change. I have often heard them question the approach that we are taking, so to see him come on board and start to follow the science, I really do appreciate that. I have to say that it is a welcome change of tone. I thank him for that.

We have led the country in the last seven days in COVID-19 cases by population and that is not where we want to be. COVID-19 is surging through the territory, and we must take immediate action to protect the health and safety of Yukoners.

Our pandemic response — our Liberal government's pandemic response — has always been consistent. We have followed the science. When the chief medical officer of health's office has made recommendations, we have released them immediately so that Yukoners know what is coming, and then we have worked very hard to implement them, doing the research, the outreach, and the policy work necessary to make these recommendations successful.

We must increase vaccination rates in the territory to keep Yukoners healthy and safe, and that is what our government is doing. We care about Yukoners' health, and we follow the science, the medicine, and the medical leadership, and we have since day one in making the very tough decisions to guide the territory through this — it is not unprecedented, but it is a once-in-100-years event that we are experiencing, something that previous generations had never seen. We have adapted and, with the support of the Yukon public, we have succeeded, in many ways, better than a lot of other jurisdictions, but right now we are in another surge — surges that we have seen across the country.

When we received the evidence, the recommendations, and the notification from the chief medical officer of health on Sunday, this caucus worked very hard to start to understand what was asked of us and to take action. Within 20 hours, we decided, looking at all the options available to us, on the action that we needed to take to make Yukoners safe.

None of us wanted to be here. None of us wanted to implement another state of emergency, but that is a tool we have to make sure that these recommendations from the chief medical officer of health are instituted across the territory as quickly as possible. We came to that decision late last night and, to the Leader of the Third Party's point, immediately issued the news release to the public. We, of course, will answer to the media and Yukoners over the coming days. We will have the information that we need to present to the Yukon public over the coming days.

We ask all Yukoners to follow these recommendations — these 10 recommendations — immediately. As of Saturday, we

will have the enforcement tools that we need to make sure that this is followed.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: COVID-19 school protocols

Mr. Dixon: Yesterday, the Premier responded to questions about the government's unwillingness to implement a rapid-testing program in our schools. We know that the federal government has provided tens of thousands of rapid tests to Yukon, and we have yet to hear the government offer any explanation as to what they are doing with them. The Premier was clear yesterday that there is no plan in place to use those in the schools.

So, if the Premier is unwilling to create a plan to deploy those rapid tests in the schools, what is the government's plan for the stockpile of tens of thousands of rapid tests that are sitting on the shelf from the federal government?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Science is the best guide when dealing with a pandemic. We continue to follow the recommendations of our public health experts, and this includes in relation to testing — all forms of testing. Our strong leadership has guided us through the pandemic and kept our economy growing. We certainly understand the concerns of parents and the concerns around cases in our schools, but as the chief medical officer of health said in public media this morning, that is not the place where cases are spreading.

We have heard from many constituents about this issue and have shared these concerns with the acting chief medical officer of health. We continue to work with our public health officials to adjust our response as necessary. We have a testing and a contact-tracing strategy that has been effective in dealing with the spread of COVID-19 in our territory, and I look forward to providing additional information to further questions.

Mr. Dixon: I don't think the minister answered my question, but I will move on.

In Alberta and Ontario, provincial governments have distributed their stockpile of rapid tests to schools. They are using them in a targeted way to focus on specific schools that are facing outbreaks.

Tests are distributed to staff and parents. They are voluntary and are to be done at home as a screening tool for students who are asymptomatic. According to the CMOH in Ontario, the intent of these programs is to detect cases in schools earlier and reduce the risk of outbreaks and closures.

Will the Yukon government create a similar rapid-testing program for schools here with the intent of reducing the risk of outbreaks and closures in our schools?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I do think that it's important to be clear. I am certainly not speaking on behalf of the minister, but we currently do not have any schools closed here in the territory. We have a testing and contact-tracing strategy that has been effective in dealing with the spread of COVID-19 in our territory. The new measures brought in last night — we hope and have great confidence — will also stop the spread of COVID-19 and end our concerns going forward. We are

looking forward to the next two to three weeks with a close watch on how cases are moving through the territory.

The acting chief medical officer of health is not currently recommending the use of rapid tests at schools. We will continue to monitor and adjust as the situation develops and get new recommendations from the office of the acting chief medical officer of health as they come forward.

The most important thing is that our testing capacity is available currently to address our immediate public health needs, including symptomatic individuals — encourage them to go to the testing facility here in Whitehorse or to their community health centres to request that support — and there will be a new drive-through starting tomorrow.

Mr. Dixon: I think that the minister is a bit out of touch because there are several classes around the territory that are shut down. In fact, as of yesterday, almost half of Whitehorse Elementary — that is Whitehorse's biggest elementary school — was shut down. The classes were sent home and parents had to stay home with their kids. Parents are growing concerned as the number of classes close, and more and more parents are having to stay home with their kids. This means that parents are having to miss work to stay home.

Other jurisdictions have taken the rapid tests and used them in the schools to reduce the number of outbreaks and closures. Here in Yukon, this would mean that fewer parents would need to stay home with their kids, and those who do could have their isolation times shortened. Parents have taken to writing a mass letter, petitions, and some have even gone to the media to ask why a rapid-testing program, like the ones being used successfully in other provinces, isn't being implemented here in Yukon.

Will the government develop a rapid-testing program here in Yukon that will be targeted at schools and aimed at reducing outbreaks and closures?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, just to correct the record, the minister has said "schools" — not "classes" — just so the member opposite heard correctly — and we are aware that there are certain classes where we have seen some situations, but here is the salient point —

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Silver: As the members opposite speak off-mic —

Speaker: Order, please. The member has the floor.

Hon. Mr. Silver: We have been very consistent, Mr. Speaker. We will follow the advice from the chief medical officer of health. We have had conversations with First Nation governments, municipal governments, and school communities. As far as testing goes, we are focused in on making sure that we implement the recommendations from the chief medical officer of health who is very cognizant of a lot of conversations coming from concerned parents and is also looking at the epidemiology in other areas.

We heard the member opposite say just this morning that they strongly urge the public to follow the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health. I hope that this applies with the Yukon Party when it comes to testing. I hope that it actually also applies when it comes to mandatory vaccinations as well.

We will continue to work with the chief medical officer of health.

Now, lots of new technologies are coming on board when it comes to testing — and also lots of exciting conversations with First Nation communities as well as far as the support. So, we will continue to implement the guidelines and the recommendations by following the science.

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic business relief funding

Mr. Dixon: Contrary to what the Premier is suggesting by downplaying the impact on our schools, the growing outbreak of COVID in our schools is starting to cause real hardship for families. As more and more children are told to self-isolate and stay home, this will result in parents having to take time off work. Many parents, particularly the single parents, will find this has serious negative financial impacts on them.

Obviously, everyone wants to do the right thing, but forcing a parent into a situation of deciding whether to stay home with their young child or to take weeks off work without pay is a lose-lose situation.

What is the government's plan to support families and single parents who are forced to take time off work as a result of the significant number of classes that are now shut down in our schools?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will ask my colleague, the Minister of Education, to answer some supplementary questions here as well, but again, to assume that the chief medical officer of health's recommendations to this government are in any way putting schools or students in harm's way — I would ask the members opposite to reconsider that as a narrative.

We are following the science. We are following the guidelines that the chief medical officer of health, through consultation locally, nationally, and internationally, has for best practices. We have heard concerns in other jurisdictions about asymptomatic tests clogging up systems and not helping the overall epidemiology or strain on the medical systems. We are going to rely on the chief medical officer of health's research — again, on the national, international, and local level — considering all factors when it comes to all of the mechanisms that she and her team are putting in place as recommendations for us.

The members opposite can cherry-pick one or two of these things and say that, in isolation, these are concerning. We are looking at the full spectrum. We also completely agree that we want to make sure that the parents and the students are well-protected and safe and that we are hearing their concerns. I will definitely, on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, say today that this is happening. Those conversations are happening in earnest every time we meet together with the chief medical officer of health and her team.

Mr. Dixon: Unfortunately, the Premier disregarded my question altogether. What I asked was: What are they doing to help parents deal with the fact that they have to stay home with their children? What sort of financial supports can they expect from this government?

With the new restrictions in place for bars and restaurants, many of these businesses will start to see significant and negative financial impacts for their businesses. These businesses all want to do their part to help protect the community, but many of them clawed and scraped just to survive the last round of restrictions. There is a very real possibility that, without proper supports in place, this next round will result in the permanent closure of a number of small businesses and restaurants.

What new supports is the government bringing into place to help bars, restaurants, and other affected businesses survive this new round of restrictions?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think what is important for Yukoners to be aware of — and certainly the private sector. First of all, we have information that's forthcoming over the next couple of days which will define which organizations are essential services and which organizations will be affected more by our protocols concerning vaccination.

What I have asked the departments of Economic Development and of Tourism and Culture to do is — due to the decisions and the announcements last night — let's first monitor what is happening with organizations that have to cancel events. There are a number of things in front of us. We want to make sure that we have a very good understanding of what those impacts are.

As well, as we move into the latter part of the week, we will have that opportunity to work directly with our chambers and the business sectors once information rolls out on our protocols to ensure that we can either augment programs that are in place right now or look at specific programs that can support our private sector.

That information is going to be out in the next couple of days. I think that our departments are well-poised to be able to support. We have done that from the start. You have heard my colleagues say that. We have been there to support both the workers and the businesses, and that is not going to change.

Mr. Dixon: For the minister's information, these restrictions are coming into effect in a matter of days, so I hope that these announcements will come forth very quickly and that programs will roll out expeditiously.

He did mention, though, the anticipated cancellation or change of scope for a number of major events this fall or winter. Organizations that have already spent a lot of money preparing are worried. Again, these groups want to do their part to protect their community, but they also want to financially survive. Earlier in the pandemic, the government had a cancelled events relief fund to reimburse events that were cancelled as a result of government restrictions.

Will the government be bringing back the cancelled events fund during this new round of restrictions?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The communications started with the private sector at about 7:20 a.m. this morning directly with different leaders who are running events. Last night, as soon as we were in a position to roll out the decisions concerning a state of emergency, I spoke to multiple deputy ministers, and we really focused at that particular time on ensuring that we could be in a position to look at the programs that we have and if we

could augment them, as stated, just to make sure. What I have said to date is that the sponsorship packages or funding agreements, or funding through transfer payment agreements, would stay solid. We are not going to touch that. It is the same thing that happened at the start of this pandemic. We know right now that folks have reached out, of course, to the legion. Some organizations have looked at different plans, but certainly the Yukon Arts Centre, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, YuKonstruct, Yukon Hospital Foundation — I had conversations this morning with geoscience — again, Spruce Bog is coming up. That's a lot of gig economy — I asked the department last night to take that into consideration. What are some things that we can do to be creative? It's very important to many of those artisans and individuals who make a lot of money from Christmas. Again, we are very focused on coming up with solutions, and we will be there to support the private sector as well as these NGOs in this very tough time.

Question re: Midwifery legislation

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, midwifery has been a long-outstanding issue in the Yukon. The NDP has been asking questions about this for decades. Now in 2021, the issue is still not solved. In fact, since midwifery regulations came into effect this year, midwives who had private practices in Yukon had to put a stop to their services, leaving many families without the care and support of a midwife. This means that there have been no midwives practising in the Yukon since this past spring. Despite the government's news releases and talking points on the subject, there are currently no midwives practising in the entire territory.

When will Yukon families have access to regulated and funded midwifery services?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am very pleased to rise to respond to the midwifery question because it is incredibly important to our government. We remain committed to moving forward with the integration of funded and regulated midwifery services into Yukon's health care system. As a matter of fact, I had a meeting about this yesterday. This work, including recruitment, is taking more time, unfortunately, than we had anticipated. We had anticipated that by the end of November this would be completed, but we are now looking at very early 2022 to launch midwifery services here in the Yukon.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I will stop, as others decided to speak about it, and I am happy to answer further questions.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, earlier today, we tabled a letter from the Yukon Association for Birth Choices advocating for pay equity for midwives in the Yukon. The association is concerned that what is being advertised in job postings will not encourage midwives to come to the Yukon and will result in high turnover for midwives leaving for better paying and better regulated jurisdictions.

Last week the minister said that, to ensure recruitment, doctors in the Yukon are paid 30 percent more than physicians in other jurisdictions. That is great, Mr. Speaker, but when it comes to licensed midwives in the Yukon, they are being

offered less pay when compared to other jurisdictions. The midwifery rollout is edging on failure.

When will the minister start considering midwives as an integral part of professional health supports and start offering the fair pay that they deserve?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Again, as the member opposite has noted — she tabled the letter today from Birth Choices. I would have very much appreciated if she had provided me with a copy of that letter. I will obtain it through the regular process of tabled documents, but I have not seen it. Asking me about it at this point I think is unfair, and I would be keen to read it and to answer — if that letter is directed to my office or to the members of the opposition, I'm not sure which — I would be happy to provide information for that. I absolutely support pay equity with respect to everyone in the Yukon Territory, but frankly, with respect to the midwifery program, it is an important aspect of that.

I will speak to members of the officials in the Department of Health and Social Services as well as those in the Public Service Commission to determine what the current situation is and how we can encourage midwives to come to the territory to provide the services that our Yukon families want and deserve. I look forward to that happening very early in 2022.

Ms. Blake: Birth Choices said that they actually sent a copy of today's letter that was tabled to the minister on Sunday.

The regulations that came into effect are also an issue. Since the regulations came into effect, the local midwives have to be registered for at least one year in another Canadian jurisdiction. This means that they have to start — or in some cases restart — their practice somewhere else, and we have to hope that they will be ready to come back in a year, only to accept a lower pay scale.

Last spring, only one midwife was left in the territory. She applied for the job and she was denied. The government blames recruitment issues, but they are the ones that created this mess.

How is this minister going to fix this failed midwifery rollout?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I noted that this is not only top of mind for the files that I am working on immediately, but also that I met and had some discussions with respect to this midwifery file yesterday. There is a great deal of work underway right now, not only by our internal implementation team, but also with the support of a number of physicians, nurses, midwives, First Nation representatives, and individuals with lived experience. We are working closely with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to ensure that, whether registered midwives are providing services in a home or in the hospital, they are able to work with their full scope of practice.

Right now, Yukoners can access a midwife in another province or territory. That is not satisfactory to our long-term planning. Our regulations with respect to midwifery and the importance of the services they provide are in alignment with other jurisdictions in Canada. They are supported by midwives who have been working on our implementation committee and work continues as we speak to introduce our midwifery program to provide services to Yukoners as soon as possible.

Question re: Resource Gateway project

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Yukon government announced the first project awarded under the Resource Gateway program, which, of course, is the Carmacks bypass. We know that the Liberal government originally announced this program in 2017, and at the time, they told the federal government that construction would start in June 2018. The project is over three years late. That said, when this funding was originally announced, it was supposed to be a public/private partnership. This means that some of the money was to come from Canada, some from the Yukon, and some from the private sector.

Of the \$29.6 million announced yesterday for the Carmacks bypass, how much will come from each of the three partners? Who is the private sector partner on this particular project?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: In the spring of 2019, a project agreement for the Carmacks bypass component was signed with Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. The project includes construction of a new road and bridge which will allow industrial vehicles to bypass the community of Carmacks and create an enhanced and safer flow of traffic for residents. It will also improve access to mining activities while enabling the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation to benefit from contracting education and training benefits associated with the project.

As the member opposite indicated, on November 8, 2021, Pelly Construction was awarded the \$29.6-million contract to ensure the new road and bridge. This project is a key component under the Yukon Resource Gateway program and a collaborative effort between the Yukon and the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation.

I can advise, Mr. Speaker, that the right-of-way clearing began in 2020 and the project is anticipated to be completed in 2024. In addition, the application by YESAB for the geotechnical assessment component of the Carmacks bypass project was approved in 2019 and is now complete. The geotechnical assessments supported an application for the full project which was submitted to YESAB in May 2020 and the decision document was completed in December 2020.

I look to provide further details in subsequent questions.

Mr. Kent: Just a reminder for the minister that my question originally was: How much of the \$29.6 million was being contributed by Canada, how much from the Yukon, how much from the private sector, and who is that private sector partner?

Mr. Speaker, I'll move on. On May 27 of this year, the minister told us there was \$15.5 million allocated to the program in this fiscal year. He stated that this money was to fund seven projects.

So, given that this is the first project awarded, can the minister tell us how much of the \$15.5 million allocated to the program has been spent so far this fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to clarify to clear the record.

First, concerning the Carmacks bypass, I think the first press release regarding that project was actually released in

June of 2016, before there was a project agreement in place. That is one thing we on the other side found curious, because there wasn't an agreement in place, which was what was needed to build it.

Secondly, I think the member opposite actually negotiated and signed the agreement, so he would remember that — I believe he signed the agreement, but he definitely was party to the structure and was an architect of the agreement. The private sector partner doesn't come in until the last section. What we are seeing right now, that partner would be Western Copper. We saw an announcement, I believe, where Rio Tinto is now looking at that particular project. I think there are a lot of steps that still have to come, although I know Western Copper is happy to see the work that is being undertaken.

Again, pretty much in all those agreements, you didn't have a private sector partner until the very last segment of road. Of course, many of those projects that were in the agreement now seem not to be coming to fruition. This is part of the challenge with the way that this overall funding program was built.

Again, I am just wanting to clear the record and make sure that Yukoners were aware of the facts here.

Mr. Kent: My second question was about how much of the \$15.5 million that the Minister of Highways and Public Works said was going to be spent this year has actually been spent. No answer from the Minister of Economic Development, but not a surprise.

Again, Mr. Speaker, back on May 27, the minister told us that the total budget for the Carmacks bypass was \$26.75 million and included construction of a new road and bridge. Yesterday's news release indicated that the project had gone significantly overbudget, and the new cost is now \$29.6 million. At the time, the Minister of Highways and Public Works also mentioned that he expected the work to commence in late July or early August. Once again, we have a major infrastructure project mismanaged by the Liberals. It's late and it's overbudget.

Why is this project almost \$3 million overbudget? Why is it late, and when will it be completed?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, our strong leadership has guided us through the pandemic and kept our economy growing. We are working to make sure Yukoners benefit from our territory's economic growth. We are building a brighter future for our territory by working in partnership with First Nation industry to upgrade resource infrastructure while providing benefits to Yukon communities. We have seen the unbalanced approach of the Yukon Party that led to court cases and uncertainty for the mining sector with a breakdown in trust

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Order, please. The member has the floor.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: — with First Nations. We are working to bring together Yukon First Nations and the mineral sector for the benefit of all Yukoners.

The Yukon Party has raised concerns about our left-wing government. Under our leadership, the industry is thriving and we have three mines in production. We have seen record placer

gold production in recent years. Beyond 2021, the outlook for mineral production value is forecast to exceed \$1 billion in all years out to 2025. That is more than the right-wing Yukon Party can say.

We now have six agreements under the Yukon Resource Gateway project. We have deals with the Ross River Dena Council, the Liard First Nation, the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, and the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. We have worked with the Government of Canada to find flexibility so that we can advance these projects in partnership with Yukon First Nations in a way that benefits all Yukoners. The Yukon Resource Gateway project will see hundreds of millions of dollars invested to improve access to resources in our territory, and we are proud to be making progress on this project.

Question re: Wildlife harvest allocations

Mr. Istchenko: Last week, the government announced to the hunting community that they are changing the approach to wildlife harvest allocations. This includes a review of the guidelines to establish outfitter quotas that have historically been used to establish moose, caribou, and sheep harvest quotas. While we understand the interest in reviewing outfitter quotas, we are concerned about what may be coming next for resident hunters.

Will the minister please explain whether or not the government is considering overhauling the system of wildlife harvest allocations for resident hunters as well?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The short answer to the Member for Kluane's question is that there are no plans, to my knowledge, of changing the quota for resident hunters, barring any additional information that is received by my officials and our office with respect to things like the funding that we have provided for aerial moose harvest and number surveys in various areas. I will be guided by data from my specialists and from input from regional resources councils, from First Nation governments, and various other stakeholders whom I have had the pleasure of working with this summer, as well as interaction with the Yukon Fish and Game Association, and I have spoken to outfitters as well. So, I will always be guided by as accurate data as we possibly can be provided with — whether we have the balance between conservation. I have also heard from stakeholders saying that we have an abundance in some species, so certainly, I will receive all that information and make the balanced, science-driven decision.

Mr. Istchenko: The announcement to the hunting community that the government is changing its approach to wildlife harvest allocations also included a commitment to the establishment of quotas for moose and caribou for outfitters in every single outfitting concession. In the past, the department only established quotas where there were conservation concerns that were supported by population data and wildlife studies. There is a growing concern in the hunting community that the government is moving toward wildlife management that is based on political considerations rather than the science.

Can the minister confirm that there is scientific data and wildlife population studies to justify the need for these quotas for moose and caribou in every single outfitting concession?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As the member opposite will well know, moose are the most harvested species by Yukon hunters and are an important species culturally. In some areas, the combined licensed and subsistence harvest of moose is at or above sustainable levels, especially in areas that are easy to access. It is important that our management approach keeps harvests within sustainable limits and respects First Nation final agreements.

At a community's request, the Government of Yukon has committed to supporting moose management planning at the regional and territorial levels. This future planning can result in collaborative recommendations for harvest restrictions and additional, more flexible, and responsive moose management tools. Harvest restrictions help to ensure long-term viable moose populations and continued licensed harvest opportunities. For example, as proposed by the Mayo District Renewable Resources Council, the Government of Yukon has committed to implementing a moose threshold hunt in the Mayo area and establishing permit hunt authorizations in the South Canol and Sifton-Miners Range moose management units for the 2022-23 hunting season.

Always guided by the best available scientific data, conducting targeted moose surveys supports our commitment to increasing data collection when and where possible, ensuring that the most up-to-date information is available for decision-making.

Mr. Istchenko: I actually asked the minister to confirm that there is scientific data and wildlife population studies to justify the need for these quotas.

Mr. Speaker, having wildlife population data and scientific backing for allocation decisions is very, very important. It's a very important aspect of wildlife management here in the Yukon.

We are hoping that the government will reconsider making allocation decisions without having the scientific data to back those decisions. It was notable to many that the government is establishing outfitting quotas in every single concession for moose and caribou but not for other species. In some concessions, species like Dall sheep can be a greater conservation concern than moose or caribou. So, why is the minister taking a uniform approach without scientific backing to his brand new system? Why is he applying quotas to all outfitters for moose and caribou when we have yet to see population studies to justify that, while also ignoring other species?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the input from the Member for Kluane, and I certainly have no intention of ignoring other species that may be at risk and where there may be conservation concerns. I certainly will do my homework over the course of the winter to ensure that we have appropriate data, not just for moose and caribou.

Weather dependent, the Department of Environment intends to conduct four moose surveys this fall. Three of the planned moose surveys will be in the lower Stewart River, the Teslin River moose management unit, and the Sifton-Miners Range Moose Management Unit. For the fourth survey, the department plans to survey moose in the Whitehorse south area,

which includes Fish Lake, Wheaton River, and Mount Lorne moose management units, in partnership with the Carcross/Tagish Renewable Resources Council. We are also looking for opportunities for additional surveys, including the Nisutlin River, Quiet Lake and South Canol moose management units.

The department staff prioritized which moose management units to survey based on a combination of factors, which include harvest levels, access, community concerns, land use planning needs, how long it has been since an area was last surveyed, and human activity occurring in the area.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I will be governed by the best available scientific data, but I certainly welcome the input from the Member for Kluane.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of opposition private members' business

Ms. Tredger: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Third Party to be called on Wednesday, November 10, 2021. It is Motion No. 200, standing in the name of the Member for Takini-Kopper King.

Mr. Kent: The Official Opposition will not be calling any private members' business on Wednesday, November 10, 2021 so that we can expedite debate and focus on important legislation and departments, such as Education and Health and Social Services.

Speaker: We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 10: *Act to Amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021)* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 10, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 10, entitled *Act to Amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021)*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 10, entitled *Act to Amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021)*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I won't take a lot of time today, but it's important to point out the amendments to the *Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act* being presented in Bill No. 10.

The government is pleased to bring forward the *Act to Amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021)* for second reading. The *Territorial Court Act* sets out the process for a Judicial Compensation Commission to be struck every three years in order to review and provide recommendations to government on the remuneration of Territorial Court Judges and Justices of the Peace.

The 2016 Judicial Compensation Commission's final report was approved in 2019. As a result of the accepted recommendations from that report of the 2016 Judicial Compensation Commission, amendments to the *Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act* are necessary and have been brought forward here in Bill No. 10.

The proposed amendments can be broken down into three parts: First, the amendments clarify and expand the scheme for how reductions are applied to pension benefit amounts in the event that a member elects to commence receipt of their pension benefits prior to the earliest unreduced retirement date. Second, the amendments clarify that a five-year guarantee applies to all pensions payable, including joint and survivor pensions for a judge with a spouse. Finally, the proposed amendments clarify that the child benefits in terms of pension amounts are payable under both the registered and the supplemental pension plans by codifying the scheme for disbursement of pension amounts to judges' children in schedule 3. These are clearly technical-type amendments contained in Bill No. 10 for the purposes of giving life to the accepted recommendations from the Judicial Compensation Commission that I have noted.

The proposed amendments seek to ensure that the 2016 Judicial Compensation Commission recommendations are implemented across the whole of the statute using consistent language and provisions where possible. The concept is aimed at harmonizing schedule 1 and schedule 3 of the act.

During an opposition briefing on the contents of Bill No. 10, a question was asked as to whether the financial considerations of the amendment have been incorporated as part of the budget mains or supplemental. I can confirm that the judicial salary and benefits considerations resulting from the proposed amendments from Bill No. 10 were in fact realized and reflected in the budget of 2019-20 in the mains. The Department of Justice can also confirm, and has done so with the Public Service Commission, that the financial considerations for the child benefits stemming from the proposed amendments are accepted along with the changes to the judicial remuneration in 2019.

Mr. Speaker, the items highlighted and the proposed amendments contained in Bill No. 10 are ones that our government is pleased to bring forward. I urge all members of the House to support Bill No. 10 and its amendments to the *Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act*. I appreciate the opportunity to present this at second reading.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, as the Official Opposition Justice critic, I will be very brief in my remarks. I understand from both reading the legislation itself and the briefing provided by officials that this is something that the Yukon government is bound to do in following the Judicial Compensation Commission requirements which are binding on government. I was advised by officials that the cost implications are quite negligible, so we will be supporting the legislation. It is somewhat a matter of housekeeping.

Ms. Blake: Thank you to the officials for their briefing. We understand that these amendments are necessary to clarify the current practice and we are in support of these changes.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, she will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise with respect to either of my responsibilities here in the Legislative Assembly and to be recognized today. Thank you so much. Thank you to the members opposite for their indicated support and for their consideration of these technical amendments that we have brought forward here in Bill No. 10.

I too would like to thank the officials from the Department of Justice who gave the briefings to the members of the opposition and who have worked so diligently on having this matter before the Legislative Assembly during this session. I appreciate that it looks like small technical changes, but I can assure all members, as they may know, that the detail and the work that goes into these kinds of amendments is just as extensive, often, as other kinds of legislation that come here before the House. I very much appreciate the work done by those officials at the Department of Justice and I want to thank them here publicly today and for those who have done the technical briefings, as mentioned by both members opposite, who have had the effect of allowing those members to have their questions answered and completely understand and then ultimately support this legislation.

I appreciate the opportunity to reply and I thank the members opposite for their support.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 16 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for second reading of Bill No. 10 agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. Blake): I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill No. 202: Second Appropriation Act 2021-22 — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Yukon Housing Corporation — continued

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Seeing none, we will proceed to line-by-line debate.

Ms. Tredger: Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, cleared or carried as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, cleared or carried

Chair: The Member for Whitehorse Centre has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, cleared or carried as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$3,795,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$3,795,000 agreed to

Yukon Housing Corporation agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Chair: Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Department of Highways and Public Works — continued

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to speak in Committee of the Whole on behalf of the Department of Highways and Public Works. Once again, I would like to introduce my officials, Sherri Young to my left, and Paul McConnell, Deputy Minister of Highways and Public Works, to my right.

A question arose at the very end of the day yesterday from the Member for Copperbelt South about a climate risk assessment for transportation infrastructure projects arising from my mandate letter of July 5, 2021. I have a bit of a response to that question.

One of the actions outlined in *Our Clean Future* is to conduct climate risk assessments of all major transportation infrastructure projects above \$10 million. Climate change impacts can cover a range of scenarios from flooding to fire to increased temperature fluctuations and precipitation events. In all cases, the point of the climate risk assessment is to be more resilient to possible climate change impacts of the future.

Indeed, we are constantly adapting our infrastructure development processes so that our assets are resilient to climate change. This is important to us, and the action item in *Our Clean Future* reflects our commitment to climate risk adaptation. As you may know, the purpose of a climate risk assessment is to determine the infrastructure's vulnerability to climate change and to incorporate climate change adaptation measures into the design to mitigate climate change impacts. For example, a climate change risk assessment may focus on determining site and project variables for permafrost, fire, flood, and other risks. The department then undertakes a qualitative and quantitative assessment of the risks and vulnerabilities. This framework addresses the probability of an identified negative event occurring and the severity of the consequences of that event on the infrastructure element.

The general approach to evaluating and incorporating climate risk in infrastructure projects is to: (1) determine the project scope and climate impact assessment study parameters; (2) determine the variables to consider including infrastructure elements, such as signage, bridges, culverts, building foundations, and road surface materials; (3) identify climate parameters that could cause degradation or failure of the infrastructure or affect its use; (4) determine specific management strategies that could be employed to reduce this

risk; and (5) determine the probability of a negative event occurring and what the severity of consequences could be.

The department analyzes questions like: What can happen? How likely is it to occur? What are the consequences to the infrastructure element? — and so on. The climate risk assessment recommendations from the analysis are then incorporated so that the final design takes into account possible climate change impacts. The result is infrastructure that is resilient to climate change.

Specific to the Carmacks bypass, recently we awarded the major construction component of the Carmacks bypass project to Pelly Construction. The company will be building the bridge and bypass road for this project. It is good news and I am happy to share it, but I also want to mention how this project is considering future climate impacts.

The design of the bridge was developed to consider specific climate and exposure considerations. Significant analysis was done to ensure that the design incorporated: (1) a change in the water flow and river levels that could occur due to climate change; (2) erosive forces that could impact the foundational elements of the bridge; (3) the range of possible future temperature fluctuations that could occur; and (4) drainage on the bridge itself to enable the effective drainage of additional water due to increased precipitation events. Highways and Public Works did a number of analyses on these components to ensure that future variation and possible climate impacts were accounted for in the project's design. In addition, to ensure that there were no permafrost considerations that needed to be considered, a geotechnical investigation was conducted that confirmed that no permafrost is present.

The design of the new bypass road has also incorporated the potential for larger runoff events by increasing the diameter of culverts from 600 millimetres to 800 millimetres. Lastly, organic materials will be spread over the slopes near the road, and once the project is finished, the affected areas will be hydroseeded to encourage growth and minimize the risk of slides and erosion.

While we are on the topic of the Yukon Resource Gateway project, I also want to discuss how road ecology considerations are part of this work. In 2020, Highways and Public Works designated a road ecologist to review and incorporate road ecology considerations into our work with the Yukon Resource Gateway program. This approach to road ecology will be integrated in all of the Resource Gateway projects regardless of whether the project is over \$10 million or not. For example, bridge designs incorporate higher river flows and increased ice jamming considerations linked to climate change. Road designs also consider any possible drainage changes that could affect foundation conditions, including permafrost change and other increased risks of geohazards linked to climate change. Road ecology and climate impacts are intertwined in so many ways, so I'm happy to see this dedicated resource in place.

Climate risk assessments for buildings and Yukon green infrastructure standards — I would also like to make one other point on climate risk assessments that I think is important. Another action in *Our Clean Future* is to conduct climate risk assessments on all major building projects over \$10 million.

We are also changing the way we do planning and monitoring for building infrastructure to include climate impacts. For example, to be more resilient to the risks of permafrost thaw, we're developing and implementing a plan by 2024 to conduct routine monitoring of the structural condition of Government of Yukon buildings located on permafrost. Madam Chair, this is true for all of our major projects including the Yukon Resource Gateway program, the Dempster fibre project, and others.

One example that I want to highlight in particular is the work that has gone into planning and designing the Old Crow health and wellness centre where Highways and Public Works has worked closely with the Vuntut Gwitchin government to address some unique challenges. The building is designed to a post-disaster occupancy standard and is also designed to serve the community in a remote area with changing permafrost conditions. The building design has needed to consider the long-term effects of changes to the local permafrost to ensure that the facility is sustainable and serves the community for the long term. Highways and Public Works continues to work with local firms and northern building and climate experts to finalize the design and to proceed to construction in 2022.

One final thing that I want to emphasize in regard to our government's action to ensure that infrastructure will withstand the effects of climate change is that we are also setting new requirements that must be met. For example, the design requirements and technical standards manual provides guidelines for property development projects across the territory. Guidance on adaptation requirements and resiliency analysis is being updated in this document.

The department is also developing an energy and sustainability lens that will provide quantitative tools to assess climate risk impacts for future infrastructure projects. I am extremely proud of the work that our government is doing to address the defining issue of our era — climate change.

There is no issue more pressing than tackling climate change. Climate change is affecting the Yukon in multiple ways. We are seeing permafrost thaw wreak havoc on our roadways and buildings. Extreme weather events disrupt our transportation routes, and changes to our growing seasons impact local food production. This is no longer an issue of the future; this is impacting our daily lives now.

We just need to look at last winter and our record snowfall to see how a change in climate impacts us, including frequent washouts and floods, as well as increased road-clearing needs. In fact, the Yukon and the north are experiencing climate change in a faster and more urgent way.

Between 1948 and 2016, the Yukon experienced warming at close to three times the rate at which global temperatures are rising. This is having a myriad of effects across our territory, affecting ecosystems, weather patterns, communities, and infrastructure. The window for meaningful action is short, but the Government of Yukon is doing our part in tackling this crisis. *Our Clean Future* and the updated target to reduce Yukon's emissions by 45 percent by 2030 is the Government of Yukon's answer to the climate emergency. We are working in partnership with Yukon First Nations, transboundary

indigenous groups, and Yukon communities to implement the strategy.

Highways and Public Works is committed to the goals outlined in *Our Clean Future* that will improve energy efficiency, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and strengthen our resilience to the ongoing impacts of climate change. Climate risk assessments and ensuring that the infrastructure that we build today will be resilient in the face of a changing climate is only one of the ways that the Department of Highways and Public Works is contributing to *Our Clean Future*. I would be happy to discuss the many other actions that we are taking, should the opportunity arise.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for that response to the question I raised yesterday. I would also like to take the opportunity to welcome his officials here today who provide support to the minister as we go through debate on Highways and Public Works.

I just want to step back to the Carmacks bypass, given that the project was announced yesterday in a government press release. Earlier on today in Question Period, I asked the minister: Of the \$29.6 million that was awarded yesterday for the Carmacks bypass, how much will come from each of the three partners? The three partners are Canada, the Yukon, and then some from the private sector. The minister's colleague, the Minister of Economic Development, interjected on one of the questions and said that Western Copper would be the private sector partner on this particular project. However, they wouldn't be contributing at this point; they would be contributing later on.

I know in the spring, in May, the minister mentioned on the floor of the House that he was advised that at least \$108 million is potentially set aside for industry or private sector contribution. If the minister can tell us how much he's expecting from Western Copper for this particular aspect of the overall funding envelope of the Resource Gateway program — how much is he expecting from Western Copper? Again, the Minister of Economic Development mentioned earlier that they are expecting that contribution sometime in the future. Does the minister have any idea when it's due and how much they are expecting with respect to this specific aspect of the Resource Gateway program?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the question from the Member for Copperbelt South.

Specific to the Carmacks bypass project, I can advise that the division of funding there is \$22.2 million federal and \$7.4 million territorial. There certainly are opportunities that are potentially provided for future projects. The Minister of Economic Development — perhaps harkening back to days gone by, perhaps when he was on some of these files — in my view was perhaps conjecturing that there could be some private partnership on future projects that are part of this program. But as the Member for Copperbelt South will know, with respect to the way that this program is profiled or the way it is set up, it is not mandatory that every project has to have a federal, a territorial, and a private contribution. Certainly, we are encouraging there to be private participation, but to the

member's specific question with respect to the Carmacks bypass project, there is no private participation.

Mr. Kent: Perhaps the minister can explain, then, what the Minister of Economic Development was speaking of in Question Period earlier today when he said that Western Copper would be the private sector partner for this particular project; if he could explain that, it would be helpful. Perhaps it is not the Carmacks bypass, as the minister has identified \$22.2 million from Canada and \$7.4 million from the Yukon government, which is the full budget. Perhaps the minister can tell me what exactly the Minister of Economic Development was talking about in Question Period when he talked about Western Copper, and I believe he also name-dropped Rio Tinto as a potential private sector partner.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I would just once again confirm that, specifically with respect to the Carmacks bypass project, it is a federal and territorial co-funded project that does not have private participation. The member opposite will know that at least some of the potential Resource Gateway components include: Goldfield, Hunker and Sulphur; Goldfield, Indian River and Coffee; Casino gold; Freegold; South McQueen; the Silver Trail to Robert Campbell improvements; the North Canol; and the Nahanni Range Road. The Member for Copperbelt South will also know that there certainly is significant mineralization as you go due south of Dawson City and northwest of Carmacks.

The Minister of Economic Development will certainly encourage private participation as we go forward in the Yukon Resource Gateway project, which now, I believe, goes out to at least fiscal year 2029-30, so stay tuned. We certainly hope that there will be private industry participation, perhaps even including Western Copper or Rio Tinto, but I can confirm that they are not part of this project.

Mr. Kent: With due respect to the Minister of Highways and Public Works, his colleague in Question Period today stepped in and answered a question with respect to the private sector component, saying that it would be backloaded — not his words, but mine — and that the funding from the private sector would be backloaded here, and it would be Western Copper. I will check the Blues. I believe he mentioned Rio Tinto as well.

Can the minister just clarify, then, when exactly this money from Western Copper and Rio Tinto would be flowing? He is a lot less definitive here this afternoon than his colleague was when he spoke in Question Period earlier today.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: To confirm for the Member for Copperbelt South, Western Copper and Rio Tinto are not involved in the Carmacks bypass, but certainly, as indicated, the Yukon Resource Gateway project is actually eligible to be accessed until, I believe, the spring of 2031. On the map, you can see that some of these projects would connect to the Carmacks bypass project. I understand that the Member for Copperbelt South may review the Blues on this, but it may well be — and I can't speak for my colleague — that he was excited to conjecture about future prospects for private miners and for private companies that might become involved, because, right now, there is \$108 million of the Yukon Resource Gateway

program funding that is still available over the course of, still, almost 10 years.

This is the first full sign-off project and we hope that there will be many more with private participation. That is the information that I have, as the Minister of Highways and Public Works, with respect to the Carmacks bypass, but I can certainly see where the Member for Porter Creek South, the Minister of Economic Development, could have perhaps been conjecturing about future participation of private miners.

Mr. Kent: I want to move on. I will take the minister back to May 27 where he mentioned that the overall Resource Gateway program was scheduled to receive \$15.5 million in this fiscal year. That was the allocation that was made for that particular program. Then I received a legislative return to a written question. I think it's dated October 27, 2021. The question that I had was: Where has the money been spent so far? How much has been spent and where has it been spent? The answer to how much was \$12,154,000 and it was spent on a number of different projects.

Again, as I mentioned in Question Period earlier today, when we first talked about this, the minister suggested at the time that work on the Carmacks bypass would begin in late July or early August. Obviously, the award was made just yesterday, on November 8. I am assuming that the government will not be expending the entire amount suggested in this fiscal year.

Can the minister update us on how much of the \$15.5 million that was originally allocated in the main budget for the overall Resource Gateway program has been spent so far this year? How much does he anticipate being spent by the end of the fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: In that the contract has just been awarded, the process now will be to discuss with the contractor what is reasonable to expend this year. I can see that it is likely a little later than anticipated, but we will certainly be in a position to answer the member opposite's questions once we get closer to the end of the year.

There has been clearing and right-of-way work that has occurred. There could be some more which will occur. I would say to the member opposite that we will be in a better position to provide an accounting of the expenditures with respect to the entire project or the entire program by the spring.

Mr. Kent: When we spoke about this on Thursday, May 27, that \$15.5 million — according to the minister at the time — broke down as follows: \$7.5 million for the Carmacks bypass. The minister has recognized, obviously, that the award was later than he had initially anticipated, so that budget will no doubt be adjusted for this fiscal year. The \$8 million remaining, which was supposed to be spent this fiscal year, was for: the Campbell Highway reconstruction, which is kilometre 335 to 414, and that was \$4 million; Campbell Highway reconstruction from kilometre 114 to 171 amounted to \$1.54 million; Nahanni Range Road, \$1.5 million; North Canol Road, \$500,000; Silver Trail, \$310,000; and then the Freegold Road, approximately \$150,000.

Taking the Carmacks bypass out of that equation for now, can the minister tell us if these other expenditures were made

with respect to the other projects identified in the Resource Gateway program?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: With respect to all of the remaining projects, I am advised that work is ongoing, but I would have a similar response as I had with respect to the Carmacks bypass, but there are still processes of assessments, permits, and baseline data gathering.

What, of course, is important for all of these agreements is that, although the preliminary agreements were signed some time ago — they were signed in 2016 and 2017 — the devil ultimately was in the details because you ended up having to have transfer payment agreements or community development agreements with the impacted First Nations, and those discussions are, in fact, ongoing with various First Nations so that those governments can have meaningful participation and meaningful benefits to their governments and to their beneficiaries.

During the course of the summer of 2021, technicians and professionals from the Department of Highways and Public Works engaged in those discussions with the government of Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation in order to enter into an acceptable project agreement, and that is hard, challenging but rewarding work, and ultimately that agreement was reached.

With respect to the remaining projects, in addition to the clearing, the environmental assessment, and the baseline data gathering, there is also engagement with the First Nations in order to agree to and enter into project agreements.

We are certainly optimistic that some of these other projects will come to fruition, and we can report back to the House and to the member opposite on other projects in the Yukon Resource Gateway program proceeding in subsequent years. But without the community development agreements and without meaningful participation from the impacted First Nations, these projects as they were signed in 2016 or 2017 aren't, in my six months of overseeing this department, going anywhere without an acceptable project agreement.

That is a bit of a long-winded answer to say that funds are being expended, and I will certainly be in a position — we have a budget, the current budget. We aren't asking for any additional funds for this year, and I will be in a position to report back to the House as to how all of this work will have unfolded in the Spring Sitting next year.

Mr. Kent: That takes me to the supplementary budget. I have a question for the minister, if he can perhaps explain it to members of the House. When we look at the operation and maintenance vote for Highways and Public Works, there was an increase of \$8.776 million, but when we look at the capital vote, there was zero increase, or net zero, so there was no decrease of capital and no increase of capital.

How confident is the minister in these numbers, given changes that we see just on \$15.5 million in projects — talking around the Yukon Resource Gateway program — and why are there no reductions or potential increases shown just given that some of the projects are going overbudget? If he could explain that to the House, that would be great.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the Member for Copperbelt South. The member — in his previous

capacity as a minister, perhaps in this department at some point years ago — will know that these estimates occur based on the budgeting work that the department is doing for April, May, June, and July of the fiscal year 2020-21, also known as period 4 variances. Speaking to my officials, I have a high degree of confidence that the numbers, as reflected in the period 4 variances, are accurate — or that they are a good estimation of the needs and the expenses and the additional legislative authority that is being sought by Highways and Public Works at that point in time.

The member opposite will know that there are future reviews of the financial situation of this ministry and all ministries. We are coming close to period 7 variances where the circumstances will be reviewed. I take the member opposite's point that — with the vagaries of COVID spending and perhaps some additional spending, but some of that is accounted for, that may be required — there could be lapses or there could be requests to come to the House for additional spending authority.

I think, to answer the member opposite's specific question, we are confident in the numbers presented for the time period in question that is being questioned and scrutinized by the Assembly in this session.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that from the minister. Again, earlier today in Question Period, we talked a little bit about the Carmacks bypass project itself. On May 27 of this year, the minister told us that the total budget for the bypass was \$26.75 million and it included the construction of a new road and bridge. Yesterday's news release indicated that the new cost of the project is \$29.6 million. Then again, in May, the minister — as I mentioned earlier in debate here today — said that he expected the work to commence in late July or early August. Obviously, that time frame has slipped as well, so we're just curious if the minister can tell us: What were the contributing factors to this project going almost \$3 million overbudget, and what are the contributing factors to it being a number of months late in starting?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The answer to the first question — and I will ask my officials and perhaps I can provide additional detail to the member opposite, perhaps even in a legislative return. But broadly — as we have seen over the last six or seven months on a number of the major contracts — and it is something that the members opposite will certainly be familiar with — there have been global supply chain issues with respect to, among other things, the price of steel.

There is a bridge component to the Carmacks bypass, which is certainly going to impact the price. Probably a global issue — but certainly a pan-Canadian issue is labour cost escalation. For a period of time as well, lumber completely spiked. The board-foot cost of lumber has since returned to a relatively normal price, and, of course, lumber is likely not a significant component of this Carmacks bypass project. So, given both the territorial economic drivers and economic challenges and the Canadian and global issues with respect to the supply chain and the provision of raw materials — which have impacted a number of projects since the spring of 2021 — and this project was very similar as far as the slight inflationary impact to it.

The other question that the Member for Copperbelt South had is with respect to — I would say in the general context — the slight delay that occurred over the course of 2021. I would just note, similar to the response that I provided before, that the Government of Yukon has taken a number of steps to ensure that Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation and the community benefit from the project. We signed a new project agreement with Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation in August of 2021. The agreement enables the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation to access potential contracting, education, and training benefits associated with the project. The project also provides funding so that the First Nation can participate effectively in the planning, design, assessment, and regulatory processes for the proposed project. In May of 2021, we hosted a speed networking event that provided local businesses with an opportunity to meet qualified contractors to pitch their goods and services.

As I said in a previous response, Highways and Public Works has met with both the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation chief and council as well as the Village of Carmacks to share the project and draft design.

As I said, we hosted this networking event in May, and a local contractor engagement plan was a critical piece in the procurement process. This was one of the first value-driven RFPs under the new First Nation procurement policy. A First Nation participation plan was part of the project.

Over the course of the summer, there were challenges, but as I said in a prior response, the only way that these projects are going to proceed is with acceptable, innovative, and progressive project agreements with the impacted First Nations. That is what has happened. To answer the member opposite's question as well, I believe that the projected completion date is now in the summer of 2024.

Mr. Kent: When the predecessor to the yukon.ca website was operating, it was easy enough to find which projects were part of the ten \$1-million exceptions or exemptions to the Canada free trade act. I haven't been able to find that on yukon.ca. Can the minister give us a sense for this fiscal year what projects have been identified for those ten \$1-million exemptions?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The Yukon government is helping to boost economic development across the territory through the use of trade agreement exceptions. The exceptions allow us to restrict procurement competitions exclusively to qualified Yukon businesses 10 times per year in order to keep the government dollars in the territory and support local businesses.

Since 2018, Yukon businesses have competed for and secured 42 Yukon-exclusive contracts worth \$20.4 million. So far in this fiscal year, trade agreement exceptions have been used to award three projects to Yukon businesses, totalling \$1.7 million. In addition to these projects, one is pending award and another four are approved for tender in the upcoming months.

Selection criteria include how much of the money spent on the project will create economic opportunities in the Yukon and whether the project supports the territory's industries and

suppliers. This year's projects include tenders for bridge replacements and upgrades, HVAC upgrades, oil-water separators, sump modifications, heating, boiler, and fuel tank replacements, infill developments, and utility installations.

Over the past five years, manufacturing, construction, and consulting contracts have been awarded for work in communities across the Yukon. I am advised that there are three projects that have been awarded, and one is closed, pending award. So, four projects have been tendered in the 2021-22 fiscal year so far, and the ones that have been awarded include: the access road/bridge replacement No. 4 at the Ketza River mine, awarded to Boreal Engineering Ltd.; HVAC system and paint booth ventilation system replacement at the parks building in Whitehorse, awarded to Hvactech Systems Inc.; and surface works and underground utilities for the Logan residential lots in Whitehorse, awarded to Castle Rock Enterprises Ltd. Once awarded, I can provide the member opposite with additional award information, and I can also ask where, if at all, on the website this information is or where it perhaps ought to be.

Mr. Kent: I look forward to hoping that the information does reappear on the website or if it is there — if the minister can direct us to where exactly it is.

I'm curious; in the minister's mandate letter, one of the bullets was to begin the process of relocating the grader station in the Marwell area, working with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation. Can the minister update us on any work that has been done in that regard so far?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The Whitehorse grader station is no longer meeting the needs of the department and must be replaced or relocated. Highways and Public Works is looking at options for relocating the grader station that is currently located in the Marwell area of Whitehorse.

In 2014, several sites were identified for a new grader station as part of a business case and functional plan. At its current location, the grader station sits on riverfront land that may be more suitable for other types of development or usage.

Under the *Kwanlin Dün First Nation Final Agreement*, Kwanlin Dün First Nation has the first right of refusal on the existing site. The infrastructure at the Whitehorse grader station is 50 years old, and the current buildings have high energy use and maintenance costs. Replacing the station is the most economical option. New, more efficient buildings at the station would help contribute to the Yukon government's greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.

I can further advise the member opposite that a functional plan has been updated. I can also advise that I have met with Chief Bill of Kwanlin Dün First Nation on this topic and have had preliminary discussions. I have also been briefed on this topic. As the member opposite can likely appreciate, this is a complex and significant project and will likely be quite costly, although it is something that should occur for a lot of the reasons that I have set out. I think that the building is beyond economic and it is a significant energy sink as well. That's what I have so far.

Mr. Dixon: I have a number of questions regarding procurement for the minister, so I will leap right into them

because I am fairly limited in my time. First of all, I wanted to ask about the First Nation procurement policy. I have a number of questions here. I will just start with digging right into the policy.

In a certain section of the policy, the commitment is made that the government will work toward awarding 15 percent or higher of all government procurements measured by number and value to Yukon First Nation businesses. So, that is a commitment that was made throughout the negotiations for this policy and has been raised by a number of businesses that questioned it.

Can the minister tell us what level of percentage of government procurements have gone to Yukon First Nation businesses in the previous year — so from the last year until the First Nation procurement policy came into effect?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I guess, in this job, one ought not to speculate, but I would say that I have seen the data, and it was single digits — it was seven or eight percent — but I will get back to the member opposite. I can confirm that the number that we are seeking — that this policy seeks to get to — is 15 percent.

I suppose, as an answer to this as well, there will be an indicator that this program is actually fulfilling its mandate or doing what it ought to do. The member opposite will have heard about the Monitor and Review Committee. The Monitor and Review Committee is made up of four Yukon First Nation representatives, four industry representatives, and three YG representatives. The Monitor and Review Committee will be tasked with evaluating the effectiveness of the policy and making recommendations to the Yukon government on areas of improvement. The committee will meet monthly and will produce an annual report, reviewing the Yukon First Nation procurement policy, with recommendations to government on how to improve the policy and its implementation.

Up until now, we have not been able to definitively know if a business is Yukon First Nation-owned or not. With the verified business registry, this is something Yukon will now be able to track. With the full implementation of the policy in effect, success over the long term will include having an increasing proportion of government contracts awarded to Yukon First Nation-owned businesses, as well as increased subcontracting opportunities to Yukon First Nation businesses.

Ideally, we should also see an increase in employment opportunities for Yukon First Nation peoples. We will be tracking this.

Success will also be demonstrated with the negotiation of community development agreements — as I have talked about — in the Resource Gateway program with Yukon First Nation governments for large projects that are happening in their traditional territory. These agreements will ensure that benefits from these large projects will stay in their communities, whether through training opportunities, apprenticeships, or businesses.

The Yukon First Nation procurement policy is unique to the Yukon. The development of procurement policies that strive to increase indigenous participation in government procurement is happening across the country, as we speak. For

example, Canada recently announced they were working toward the target of five percent of all federal contracts being awarded to indigenous businesses.

To answer the member opposite's question, I believe the prior year was single-digit percent — maybe I have it; yes, it is basically what I thought — it is estimated between seven and eight percent, with an overall objective of 15 percent.

Mr. Dixon: In his prepared remarks, he noted that up until this policy came into force, there was no way to verify whether a business is First Nation-owned or not. That is what he just said. So, if that's the case, how are they able to arrive at a number if they don't know whether a business is First Nation-owned or not? How can they draw a conclusion as to a percentage of the contracts that go to First Nation businesses when they don't know if businesses are First Nation or not?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: That's a fair question from the member opposite. I'm advised that the estimated data we had received was from the Yukon Bureau of Statistics, indicating Yukon First Nation participation in the private sector, but I certainly take the member opposite's point that now, pursuant to the Yukon First Nation procurement policy, we should be in a position to demonstrably and hopefully accurately verify Yukon First Nation businesses so that we have good data.

The member opposite will likely know that the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce will now be managing the business registry and verification process. It is essential that all businesses on the registry be verified to ensure that the benefits of the policy are going to the correct people — the right people. For Yukon First Nation businesses to be added to this registry and earn bid-value reductions, they will need to be verified. For a Yukon First Nation business to be verified, they will need to submit the appropriate documentation to verify that they meet the definition of a "Yukon First Nation business" under that policy.

The Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce already works to support and represent Yukon First Nation-owned businesses; therefore, it was a good fit for them to be part of the verification process.

It is essential that all businesses on the registry meet the definition of a Yukon First Nation business under that policy. By having only verified businesses on the registry, everyone can feel confident that all businesses meet the requirements of the policy when accessing the registry. Verification allows us to ensure that bid-value reductions related to ownership and business location are only applied to verified Yukon First Nation businesses. Depending on the complexity of the ownership structure, it will take up to 15 business days, recognizing in the initial month that there may be a large volume of applicants who could be impacted by verification timelines.

The member opposite will likely know that a Yukon First Nation business meets one of the following criteria: one, a corporation or not-for-profit corporation where one or more Yukon First Nations is the direct or beneficial owner of 100 percent of the shares of the corporation; two, a sole proprietorship owned by a Yukon First Nation person; a partnership or limited partnership where at least 50 percent of

the partnership is owned by a Yukon First Nation or organization described in number one or two; a corporation with at least 51 percent of the corporation's voting shares owned by a Yukon First Nation person or organization described in number one or two; or a not-for-profit organization in good standing under the *Societies Act* with at least 51 percent of its membership comprised of Yukon First Nation persons.

A sole proprietorship owned by a non-Yukon First Nation person which supports a Yukon First Nation spouse or common-law partner and/or a Yukon First Nation family may qualify as well as a Yukon First Nation business.

Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Chair: Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Ms. Tredger: I want to extend my thanks to the officials for their time today, as well as the briefing they gave us earlier; it was very helpful.

I would like to start by following up on some of my colleague's questions. There was some discussion of the climate risk assessment that is to be done for projects over \$10 million, and in *Our Clean Future*, it says: "... climate risk assessments ... such as through the federal Climate Lens assessment..." I have looked up the federal climate lens assessment that is used federally, and it has two components: a greenhouse gas mitigation assessment, as well as a climate change resilience assessment. I have heard lots of talk about climate change resiliency — like how these projects will adapt to future change. I haven't heard as much talk about the greenhouse gas mitigation piece of the assessment, and I am wondering: Is there a greenhouse gas mitigation assessment being done for all projects over \$10 million?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question — to the Member for Whitehorse Centre. One of the ways we are making progress is by making our government buildings operate more efficiently and use less energy. We are committed to retrofitting Government of Yukon buildings to contribute to a 45-percent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

Highways and Public Works has a new program focused on this, called the green infrastructure fund program. It is a multi-year capital investment fund dedicated to implementing renewable energy systems, building retrofits, and sustainability projects. This year, the department has budgeted \$13 million for building energy projects. These include \$10 million for completing 20 building energy retrofit projects and \$3 million for energy assessments and conceptual designs for renewable energy systems.

Two significant building retrofits we are currently working on include replacement of the Yukon University roof and replacement of the youth justice centre skylight — actually, I think that is the courthouse and replacement of the Youth Criminal Justice Court skylight. Actually, I think that is the courthouse, the Andrew Philipsen Law Centre skylight, and I can anecdotally say that I have been there when the buckets were put out for the rains to come down from the heavens — the skylights — so, that has been 25 years in the making.

These projects may sound straightforward, but they will do a lot to improve the energy efficiency of both buildings, helping us to advance *Our Clean Future* commitments.

The Yukon University roof project is planned to start next year. By improving the thermal efficiency of the roof, we estimate that the project will reduce the building's greenhouse gas emissions by about 10 percent. Likewise, the replacement of the skylight at the courthouse will improve insulation and will reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by about 11 tonnes per year. The skylight project is currently in the design phase, with construction work expected to start next summer.

As we upgrade and retrofit government buildings, we are also ensuring that low carbon renewable energy, such as biomass, is used for heating our buildings whenever possible and that our heating systems are as efficient as possible. This year alone, we have issued tenders for two renewable energy projects. One is an expansion of the district heating biomass system at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and associated buildings; the second is the installation of a biomass system at Elijah Smith Elementary School in Whitehorse. We anticipate that construction will begin on these projects next year.

We are also planning to install renewable energy generation systems in five off-grid government communities by 2025 in order to reduce our reliance on diesel-generated electricity. Beyond efficiency, we are investing in systems that capture and recover heat so that it isn't wasted. An example of this in action is a secondary school in Watson Lake which is now connected to a waste-heat recovery system. The system saved \$45,000 last year in heating costs and reduced our greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent at that location.

Madam Chair, as we move forward with the implementation of *Our Clean Future*, we need to know where to focus our attention on, what will have the biggest impact on reducing emissions. To this end, the department has completed certified energy audits on 52 high-emission Yukon government buildings in Whitehorse. This has given us a good understanding of the state of our buildings and what retrofit work needs to be done to make them more energy efficient. We are continuing to assess Yukon government buildings across the territory to ensure that we are implementing the most important retrofits in the right places.

Two large feasibility studies are currently underway that will evaluate biomass, solar, geothermal, and other renewable energy options at over 50 sites across the territory. These feasibility studies will inform future renewable energy construction projects over the next several years.

Moving forward, we will continue to require that all new government buildings use 35 percent less energy than the

targets in the *National Energy Code of Canada for Buildings*. Recognizing that energy use is also affected by our habits, how much we heat our buildings, whether we leave lights on, and so on, we will implement an education campaign for Yukon government buildings to encourage more energy-efficient behaviours by occupants and visitors. Overall, these measures will help us to save money and reduce emissions.

Madam Chair, I will leave it at that. I have more good news, but I will leave it at that for now.

Ms. Tredger: There was a lot of interesting information in that answer that I would like to follow up on, but for now I would like to go back to my question. To be more specific, *Our Clean Future* action T28 states: “Continue to conduct climate risk assessments of all major transportation infrastructure projects above \$10 million, such as through the federal Climate Lens assessment.”

I have heard the member opposite talk about the climate risk piece — like how these projects will do in a changing climate — but I haven’t heard any discussion of whether there was any assessment of greenhouse gas mitigation, which is required in the federal climate lens assessment.

My question is this: Is there a requirement for major transportation infrastructure projects to do a greenhouse gas mitigation assessment, and was that done? In particular, I am interested in the bypass project.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The relatively quick answer for the Member for Whitehorse Centre is that most of the substantive decisions made with respect to the Carmacks bypass predated my mandate letter.

Obviously, issues of climate risk assessment — and I anticipate that the follow-up from the member opposite will be that it’s not new. I certainly accept that.

From my officials, I have heard that, specific to employees at the Department of Highways and Public Works, there are actually training sessions now occurring to inform our employees of the necessity to employ a climate lens as mandated by the federal government. I am also advised by my officials that, with respect to the ongoing national trade corridor funding — which is primarily the north Klondike — it is mandated that there be a climate lens.

The member opposite will also have heard this before, but broadly, by improving our road infrastructure in the Yukon from, in some places, gravel and, in other places, bituminous surface treatment-1 or bituminous surface treatment-2 to put it to bituminous surface treatment-3, then you can run heavier loads for more parts of the year. If you can run heavier loads, you will be running fewer truckloads. That is certainly part of our assessment with respect to transportation resilience and transportation infrastructure, combatting the issues of intermittent permafrost, which is in the mid-Yukon and certain between here and Dawson.

It is pretty straightforward math, I suppose, but if you are running trucks at 50-percent load or 60- or 70-percent load, then you just have to run that many more trucks to provide groceries, oil, wood, or whatever you are providing to the communities or providing to Whitehorse.

It’s a slightly long-winded way of saying that — committed to the climate lens, certainly, on projects. I have buy-in from my department and, of course, buy-in from the Department of Environment as we move to accelerate the benchmarks and the deliverables that exist in *Our Clean Future*.

Ms. Tredger: So, I’m just trying to sort through that answer a little bit. I’ll tell the House my understanding and perhaps the member opposite can correct me if I’m wrong. It sounds to me like there was no greenhouse gas mitigation assessment of the Carmacks bypass because — I assume because — it happened before they started doing that. They are in the process of training employees to employ a climate lens.

The piece I really want to get clarity on is: When we talk about a climate lens, there are these two sides. One is the adaptation. How are we going to deal with an inevitably changing climate going forward?

But then the other piece is the prevention: How is this project going to impact our greenhouse gas emissions?

I would really like to get clarity on whether that piece is happening right now within the department around transportation infrastructure. Perhaps the member opposite can tell me: Has his department done any greenhouse gas mitigation assessments for any transportation projects that are currently happening or planned for the future?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I suppose I would repeat the answer that I provided, which is that, on a go-forward basis in the territory, the national transportation corridors fund, which is providing \$350 million to \$400 million in road infrastructure funding in the next eight years or so — there is a mandatory climate lens with respect to that project, but also, with respect to our territorial infrastructure and road projects, all future projects have a mandated climate change lens as well.

The member opposite will be well aware of some of the other initiatives. Our government is advocating for active transportation where at all possible, and, of course, while a significant part of the Yukon’s emissions come from our buildings — 21 percent to be precise — the biggest source of Yukon’s emissions is actually from the transportation sector. Roughly 54 percent of the Yukon’s total emissions come from road transportation and seven percent come from aviation.

To lead the transition away from fossil-fuel driven cars to electric vehicles, Highways and Public Works is ensuring that at least 50 percent of all new light-duty cars purchased for the government fleet are zero-emissions vehicles. I will push — and my officials have certainly heard me — on that. The time is now for that transition if the stock is available.

We will also modernize our heavy-duty vehicle fleet by 2030 to further reduce emissions and fuel costs. The department purchased two EVs earlier this year and is planning to tender for 12 further vehicles this fiscal year. When able, and when the supply exists, the department plans to tender for not only electric cars, but also for electric trucks, vans, and SUVs.

It is certainly an exciting time. It is an exciting time in western Europe and it is an exciting time in North America. Ford and GM are onside with respect to their light- and intermediate-sized delivery vans, which will be, in my view,

completely optimal for our Yukon communities. We certainly want to lead by example.

Of course, electric vehicles also need charging stations. The Yukon government is committed to making all road-accessible communities reachable by electric vehicles by 2027. I would certainly like to accelerate that and I know that my department has heard me on that before, but I will push. To do this, a series of electric charging stations will be built along our highway network. All electric charging stations will be designed and constructed to ensure the safety of the travelling public. To start this important work, Highways and Public Works, in partnership with Energy, Mines and Resources, is installing six new public charging stations by next year in communities outside of Whitehorse.

Madam Chair, this year the department will also update the government's design requirements and technical standard manual to require five percent of all parking spots in new or renovated parking lots in Yukon government-owned buildings to be electric-vehicle-charging ready. As stated, with the teeter-totter coming to a tipping point, I am sure that technology and available supply will even outstrip that number sooner rather than later.

Making sure that vehicles are more efficient is an important goal; however, we also want to strive for fewer vehicles on the road and smarter travel decisions overall. The global pandemic has taught us that we can be much more efficient in how and when we travel. To that end, we will work on a system to coordinate carpooling for Yukon government staff travelling by vehicle to work in the territory to help reduce congestion and air pollution. We will also expand our video and teleconferencing systems and require employees to consider these options. After more than a year of employees working remotely, we know that it is possible to be productive and maintain positive working relationships with tools like Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

Lastly, when we design highways and other transportation infrastructure, we will continue to incorporate active transportation, ensuring that Yukoners have safe options to walk, bike, or kicksled.

Madam Chair, I think I have answered some of the member opposite's questions. I am sure she has more, which is great, but I think that the summary is that, pursuant to the federal national trade corridors fund and all of our transportation infrastructure logistics, projects going forward will have a climate lens. I welcome further questions.

Ms. Tredger: I really want to divide this climate lens conversation into two pieces: one is the adaptation piece. How will things be affected going forward? The other is the impact that the projects are going to have on climate change itself. What will be the greenhouse gas emissions effect of doing this project?

What I understood from that answer was that there is a plan to do that, going forward. To date, there has not been a single assessment for any transportation project on what the greenhouse gas emissions net effect of the project will be. Can the minister confirm that?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: So, if the member opposite is asking, among other things, what the GHG impact is of these projects, I don't think we have that — fair point — I don't think we have that information, but we certainly will be — it will be part of the assessment going forward.

The member opposite will also note from *Our Clean Future*, and as I stated this afternoon, that in order to meet our goals, a combination of transportation and heating is approximately 70-something percent — approaching 75 percent — in the *Our Clean Future* document, and in fact, road transportation is 54 percent. So, that is why, among other reasons — one of the motivating reasons — the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and I, in my capacity as the Minister of Highways and Public Works and the Minister of Environment, are focused on this.

If the proposition being put forward is that there has to be an assessment of whether it makes sense to create resilient infrastructure, we will do that analysis, but I think it is probably — it is ultimately — likely a resounding “yes”, that we should be creating a resilient infrastructure in the Yukon.

As I said before, if you have more robust roads, you have safer roads, first of all, but also, they have greater load tolerances. So, on the GHG emissions — the oil B-trains, the grocery trucks, and all the other trucks that are coming up the highway can come up relatively fully loaded, and sure, there is a climate lens assessment when we build our more robust charging stations that hopefully are — I hope that they are — solar-powered, and we have electrified the Yukon highway system. Of course, as a consequence of that, we will have fewer GHGs being emitted and a more robust infrastructure.

I have some comments on permafrost, which is part of creating greater resiliency in our infrastructure. Permafrost thaw is damaging buildings and roads, changing landscapes, and affecting ecosystems. As permafrost thaw continues, maintenance costs for buildings and roads will increase. To be more resilient to these risks, we are developing and implementing a plan by 2024 to conduct routine monitoring of the structural condition of Government of Yukon buildings and roads located on permafrost. With our partners at Community Services, we are conducting climate risk assessments of all major buildings that we fund over \$10 million. Innovation is key to our approach to climate adaptation. For example, we are working with the Government of Canada to support the stabilization of permafrost with technologies like thermosiphons. I think there was a picture in the media today of the thermosiphons that have been installed around Beaver Creek.

One of our climate adaptation projects involves the design and construction of thermosiphons at Dry Creek, along the Alaska Highway. These may stabilize permafrost thaw by running cool air beneath the surface of the road. If proven successful for road applications, the use of thermosiphons will reduce road maintenance costs and prolong the surface life of Yukon highways. Innovative approaches such as this will ensure the Yukon continues to be a leader in climate adaptation and mitigation.

Drawing upon the expertise of Yukon University climate scientists, we are setting up a research project to develop a guideline document for climate change adaptation practices. This means that we take into account flood, wildland fire, permafrost, and other natural phenomena resulting from climate change into our infrastructure design. We are collaborating with the Yukon Conservation Society and Yukon University to pilot a commercial-scale electrothermal storage system. This system will store excess electricity during off-peak hours and use it during peak hours to balance our energy load.

I know that the Yukon Conservation Society also has the contract for this electrothermal storage program in residences as well. I think they have confirmed close to 45 installations, so that is very exciting.

While I am proud of the work the government is doing to reduce emissions and implement *Our Clean Future*, the climate emergency demands that we do better. This is why I have directed the department to accelerate the climate actions that we are taking as a government and actively work to achieve greater emission reductions on a quicker timeline than originally planned, wherever possible.

Highways and Public Works is now undertaking additional projects to help reduce emissions, doing everything they can to complete existing projects faster, and redefining green infrastructure requirements, with a more aggressive energy-efficiency target. This will help get the Yukon on a path toward carbon neutrality.

The department has also put together an *Our Clean Future* acceleration team to focus on developing and incorporating an energy efficiency and environmental sustainability lens into the decision-making processes for major government projects, policies, and programs. Having this lens will ensure that greenhouse gas emissions and climate change resilience are considered on a regular basis when capital decisions are made across government.

We do want to be leaders in sustainable infrastructure — not just in Canada, but around the world. This means ensuring not only that our infrastructure is planned, designed, constructed, and operated in a way that reduces emissions, but also that it is resilient enough to adapt to the challenges that climate change poses for our territory.

I believe that I am meeting with the acceleration team at the end of this week, and I certainly look forward to their progress report. I think that these are challenging, but I think that they are exciting, times for the Yukon.

Ms. Tredger: So, in response to a petition that was tabled in the last Sitting — the response to the petition came recently, and it said — it was about climate change — and it said that the Yukon government is already incorporating a climate lens into their decisions. I take it this doesn't apply to Highways and Public Works, because to date, as far as I can tell from the member opposite's answers, there hasn't been a single greenhouse gas emissions assessment of any of their transportation infrastructure projects, which is what I thought "using a climate lens" meant — but I do want to leave that for now.

I do have an additional question about the Carmacks bypass. Yesterday, in his closing comments, the minister said that it will improve access to mining activities, and I am wondering if he can specify which mines it will improve access to.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: With respect to the Carmacks bypass project, as I indicated during the course of my comments this afternoon, there is an abundance of potential significantly mineralized deposits in the Carmacks area on the Freegold Road and in the Mount Nansen area, but I will certainly ask Energy, Mines and Resources and I can get back to the member opposite as to what projects they would be, but this is creating the preliminary transportation infrastructure and there would have to be connectors at some point.

Just to be clear because I have said it a few times now, there is an assertion and the member opposite is saying that there is no climate lens yet. There is, but first of all, yes, with everything going forward currently, yes, and also with respect to the national trade corridors funds, there is a mandatory climate lens. Those projects are occurring now, so it's not accurate for the member opposite to say that this climate lens assessment is not occurring. It is occurring with respect to the national trade corridors funds, and it will be occurring with respect to all projects going forward.

I will leave it at that.

Ms. Tredger: So, I have a broad question about building roads for the purposes of mines and when that responsibility lies with the mines and when the government takes it on, because this is a nearly \$30-million project. I know that a lot of that comes from Canada, but I believe that over \$7 million is coming from the Yukon to support private businesses and private mines. I know that this particular decision was made years ago, but I'm wondering what the approach is to decide which roads the government is going to take on responsibility for building for the purposes of mining.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Yes, the Carmacks bypass will potentially provide access to mining properties in the future, but initially it is actually a bypass, so the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation expressed an interest in this project, and ultimately, going forward in the mid to long term, it will improve safety to their community by not having industrial-scale trucking and trucking activity through their community.

I don't disagree with the member opposite that the overall Resource Gateway program is ultimately a federal policy choice. There is access to resources. The Yukon itself, of course, is supportive of the critical minerals strategy, which will certainly be a part of the global solution with respect to greenhouse gas emission reductions when we are building a lot more batteries, massive wind turbines — whether the wind turbines are on big islands in the North Sea — or grid-scale battery projects, like the one that we are clearing land for at the top of the south access, because storage will be incredibly important. Development in storage will be important because we will have strong access to solar and wind, but we will have to be able to store it. The roundabout answer to the member's question is that the Yukon has the opportunity to be part of the solution. It won't be a large part of the global solution, but it

will be part of the solution. Canada has a critical minerals strategy, and Yukon has some of those critical minerals.

I am also advised that the Carmacks bypass accesses areas in and around Carmacks where there is also mine remediation, so that is important too from an environmental perspective. Is it a choice? Yes, it's a choice. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and I certainly want there to be responsible, well-funded mining projects going forward.

There have been some suboptimal projects in the past that Yukoners and Canada will be cleaning up for a long, long time. But there is a policy choice for Yukon to be part of the solution going forward. A number of the minerals that are abundant or available — even lowly copper is important on a global market — cobalt and other minerals —

The answer, I suppose, is that, yes, it's a policy decision to support mines. Would we want to have more private participation in the Resource Gateway program going forward over the course of the next eight, nine, and 10 years? The answer is a resounding yes, and we look forward to those negotiations continuing. I believe that the primary on that is Energy, Mines and Resources. We are the implementors or the contractor/builders.

I'm not sure if that entirely answers your question, but I think that, yes, obviously it is a policy decision. In 2017, the federal government determined that this Yukon Resource Gateway program had benefit to the territory. We will certainly make ongoing efforts to have this program actualized in the most environmentally responsible, progressive, and state-of-the-art manner possible.

Ms. Tredger: I'm going to switch gears completely, actually, and go back to a question that I asked in Question Period on November 3. I asked a question about water delivery in Old Crow, and I received an answer from the Minister of Community Services. My understanding is that water delivery is a service provided by Highways and Public Works employees in Old Crow. My colleague, the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, did write a letter to the Minister of Highways and Public Works about this in August. In the reply, she was told that the Department of Highways and Public Works would work with local citizens to make training opportunities available to local people. Can the minister give us an update on that work?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I understand that it is currently Highways and Public Works staff who are subcontracted by Community Services, using Vuntut Gwitchin equipment. Anyway, that is kind of unimportant to your question, but what I can say is that the deputy ministers of both departments are in discussion on this matter. I have also been told that our department has reached out to the Vuntut Gwitchin government and has offered training opportunities. I don't know whether those training opportunities have been taken up, but they have also been advised that, when there are gaps in service in Old Crow, from time to time, staff have been flown in from Dawson to assist.

The correspondence that you are referring to — I have e-mails here, and it looks like we responded on August 4 to the Leader of the Third Party and to the Member for Vuntut

Gwitchin. The most up-to-date information that I have is that the Deputy Minister of Highways and Public Works and the Deputy Minister of Community Services are talking and that Highways and Public Works has reached out to the Vuntut Gwitchin government to discuss the possibility of training opportunities, and finally, when there have been gaps in service for water delivery, fly-in staff have been provided from time to time from Dawson.

Ms. Tredger: Thank you for that answer; I found it really helpful.

I am going to jump around a bit, because I just want to fit in what I can before the end of our day. One of the commitments that the member opposite referenced in one of his answers was that all new Government of Yukon buildings be designed to use 35 percent less energy than the targets in the National Energy Code for Buildings — I believe that is how that is worded — and I am wondering if the new Whistle Bend school meets that criterion. I also wonder if there are any other new buildings planned and whether they meet that criterion.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The answer I have been provided is yes, and the proposed Burwash school will meet those standards as well. If I receive any information subsequent to my appearance here this afternoon, I can certainly provide an update to the member opposite.

I have one final comment. I note, as well, even as recently as the completed — give credit where credit is due, I suppose, with respect to the Official Opposition — the new F.H. Collins Secondary School — although a little smaller than we would have liked — actually exceeded energy efficiency than its previous build. It went from a bronze LEED to a silver LEED to a gold LEED building, primarily because it is a two-storey structure, and it is relatively efficient. I think the newish F.H. Collins is quite energy efficient. It may not meet these standards, however.

Ms. Tredger: That's great to hear. That is really good news.

Another thing the member opposite mentioned, as well as was mentioned in the annual report for *Our Clean Future*, is that 23 Government of Yukon buildings were retrofitted in 2020. This is to help us get to our goal of all Government of Yukon building emissions going down by 30 percent by 2030. I am wondering how that number of 23 fits in with the overall plan. Are we on track to meet that 30-percent reduction? Do we know how many more buildings have to be retrofitted to get to that 30-percent reduction?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: A shortish answer is that *Our Clean Future* provided an objective of a reduction of 30 percent of greenhouse gases by 2030, measured at 2010 levels. Subsequent to — in the last six months or so, those objectives have been — those goals have been increased to 45 percent below 2010 levels by 2030. So, in the *Our Clean Future* document, you have the documents with respect to retrofits and the electric vehicle purchases and other metrics.

What I would say, and in similar comments I made previously with respect to our acceleration team — and we have acceleration teams in various departments — we will not reach

the goals and objectives in 2030 if we don't get off to a strong start.

It's exciting that we have this inventory of 52 buildings. My department will provide me with guidance for the next year as to what the best three or four big candidates are for retrofits, but we have heard about the college, and we have heard about the skylight at the courthouse in Whitehorse, but there is more to come. If we don't do well, if we don't have a good start in 2022 or 2023 or 2024, then there is not really a strong likelihood that we will reach our goals in 2030.

Like I said, exciting times. We are also looking for prudent use of government funds, but we will have to move more quickly than *Our Clean Future* indicates, based on the revised commitments that we have made. We have committed to reporting on an annual basis, and we will do so. I'm checking in with both of my departments on a monthly basis, if not sooner, as to where we are going.

The only way to get to where you want to get to in 2030 is to, as I said, make reasonable, strong, and credible strides in the first two or three years of our commitments.

Ms. Tredger: I absolutely agree that we need to make a strong start; I am just unclear as to whether 23 buildings is a strong start or not. What I am wondering about is where we are en route to that 30-percent reduction. I understand that this is probably going to have to change, now that we have revised the targets, but I just wanted to know what percentage reduction, I suppose, 23 buildings represents or how we are doing in terms of pace.

I will leave that, because time is short.

One of the other things in *Our Clean Future* is a call for a sustainable procurement strategy. That was supposed to come in 2020. I will fully admit that this has been a busy, busy time in lots of ways, so I understand that the draft is being worked on now. I am wondering if the minister could give us an update on where that sustainable procurement strategy draft is.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: We have committed to exploring new and innovative procurement methods to support sustainability. Sustainable procurement practices consider the social, economic, and environmental factors in the procurement process. With the state of our climate, our government is focusing on ways we can consider the environmental impacts of our procurement choices. Within our climate change strategy — *Our Clean Future* — we outlined several actions related to sustainable procurement. Some of these include updating our policies and standards to support sustainable and local procurement and to support local food producers. We are already addressing these actions through the Yukon First Nation procurement policy and the regional economic development exceptions.

However, the climate crisis requires us to take a step further. Yukon government is creating a sustainable procurement strategy that provides procurement authorities with different tools to support them in making sustainable choices. Our strategy is based on the experiences of the Canadian Collaboration for Sustainable Procurement, which is a working group of municipalities and organizations across

Canada. Acquisition services and planning is currently piloting this program to test out some of the tools and practices.

All of the tools are designed to help procurement authorities make informed choices when purchasing goods and services. The tools include: a questionnaire for suppliers to fill out that informs the government of their sustainability practices; a list of certified eco-labels for goods; a checklist for procurement authorities that will help them make more sustainable choices; evaluating the total cost of an item through its life cycle by including expenses such as maintenance and disposal; and lastly, performing a risk and opportunity assessment that will help procurement authorities identify any sustainability risks and ways to mitigate them. These tools are ways that we can meet our goals under *Our Clean Future* and continue to address the climate crisis. Once the pilot project is complete, we will continue to expand the program.

I also have a note here about a plan to have some conferences. Conferences are an excellent way to generate new ideas about procurement and build relationships between government and industry. Each year, the Procurement Support Centre hosts an industry conference and the reverse trade show. These events allow businesses, associations, and governments to gather, connect, and learn about public procurement. In 2019, we had 155 vendors attend the reverse trade show and over 130 people register for the industry conference. Over the last year and a half, we have had to adjust, of course, how we offer events during COVID, but we certainly look forward to having these trade shows again in the future, when able. The Procurement Support Centre has been offering virtual options for some of these events.

So, answering the member opposite's questions, yes, there are the beginnings of a sustainable procurement policy and consideration in relation to our sustainability goals and practices.

Ms. Tredger: I thank the member for that answer.

Another element to *Our Clean Future* calls for coordinated carpooling and new guidelines for fleet rentals to help reduce emissions, and in particular, T21 says: "Develop guidelines for the Government of Yukon Fleet Vehicle Agency's fleet by 2021 to ensure appropriate vehicles are used for the task at hand."

Could the minister give us an update on that policy?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I agree with the member opposite that active transportation and carpooling is certainly an objective that we should be looking at. I have heard that some preliminary plans are afoot for combining schedules in various departments. We certainly want to strive for fewer vehicles on the road and see smarter travel decisions made overall. We will work on a system to coordinate carpooling for Yukon government staff travelling by vehicle for work in the territory to help reduce congestion and air pollution.

We also talked about video and teleconferencing systems and remote work arrangements earlier this afternoon.

But certainly, behaviour change is important. Positive behaviour change is important if it can be gently nudged along. I have just been advised that Highways and Public Works is working to develop software to be ready when COVID

restrictions are lessened. I guess that software is with respect to scheduling and carpooling.

Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on the projects that Highways and Public Works is working on this year and going forward.

But, Madam Chair, seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale North that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the Speaker do now resume the chair.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

May the House have a report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the House do now adjourn.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to

Speaker: This House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

Additional signatures were tabled November 9, 2021 regarding the following petition:

Petition No. 5

Re: Mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations (McLeod)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 30

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, November 10, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier Government House Leader* Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
Hon. Nils Clarke	Riverdale North	Minister of Highways and Public Works; Environment
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Government House Leader* Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Minister of Economic Development; Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Jeanie McLean	Mountainview	Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

Currie Dixon	Leader of the Official Opposition Copperbelt North	Scott Kent	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Yvonne Clarke	Porter Creek Centre	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Emily Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Annie Blake	Vuntut Gwitchin

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

*Government House Leader: Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee to November 4, 2021; Hon. John Streicker from November 5, 2021

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, November 10, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.**

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.
We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

**Speaker's statement — in recognition of
Remembrance Day**

Speaker: I have some notes here before we proceed with Orders of the Day that I want to read regarding Remembrance Day.

Thursday, November 11 is Remembrance Day. It is a day when Canadians are encouraged to take time to honour those who have served and continue to serve in the Canadian Forces.

At this time of year, we remember the men and women who have defended Canada during times of war and have brought peace to troubled parts of the world. While Remembrance Day has always been a day to remember those who died in the service of Canada, lately we have become more aware that the price paid by our service men and women sometimes extends beyond their time in uniform. We must remember this and continue to support these fellow Canadians. At this time of year, we also wear poppies to honour the memory of soldiers, sailors, and air force personnel. In doing so, we often reflect upon the great battles that they engaged in.

This year, I will remember Alex Van Bibber, his brothers, Archie and Dan, as well as their friend John Adamson. This triumphant group of aboriginal northerners did their basic training in Vancouver and Wetaskiwin and later took advanced training in Currie Barracks in Calgary. John Adamson and Dan Van Bibber saw service in Europe while the younger brothers, Alex and Archie, were not deployed to Europe before VE Day and instead began training for service in the Pacific. Their training ended when victory over Japan was declared in 1945. They were all discharged by 1946.

Upon returning, we must also remember that treatment of our aboriginal veterans during this period was not the same as for non-aboriginal veterans. This remains a stain on our history. While this was later corrected, it must be part of our thoughts on Remembrance Day that these men and many others served for ideals that were not afforded to them.

We will always be grateful for their service as well as the service of all of our soldiers. While not all served in battle, they did their duty when called upon. We do not celebrate war on this day, and we must remember that war is a human failure — a deep scar on our humanity — and the best result is to avoid the heavy human costs of wars. Sadly, this is not always possible.

Today, we remember the actions of soldiers, sailors, and air force personnel during times of war. We remember the legacy they have left to us. The freedoms that we exercise daily are exercised largely because of the sacrifices made by brave individuals who have served Canada over the years, sometimes in unimaginable circumstances.

As Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and as a Member of the Legislative Assembly, I am reminded of this every day. Canada is a country where free and fair elections are held, where elected officials at all levels can openly debate government laws and policies, and where the rule of law prevails. It is easy to take all of this for granted. We have been born into a country or have come to a country where these institutions already exist and are supported, not just by laws, but, most importantly, by our beliefs in them and our commitment to them.

The establishment of this institution and the ideals that they embody was only possible — and their continued existence is only possible — because there has been and continues to be fellow Canadians who are willing to serve and risk and pay the ultimate price to protect them. This is one reason why we shall remember them.

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will proceed at this time with the Order Paper.

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for those words. Speaking of legends in the Yukon, we are honoured today to have some more heroes and legends here in the gallery. I am going to start and ask my colleagues to help me in welcoming — starting with Joseph Novak, retired lance corporal, recently appointed a knight of the French National Order of the Legion of Honour. Mr. Speaker, this is the highest declaration in France. He served with the Canadian Army Service Corps during the Second World War. Thank you for being here today.

We also have with us Joe Mewett, president of the Whitehorse Legion Branch 254 and as well, no stranger to the Legislative Assembly, former Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms for the Yukon Legislative Assembly. We also have Red Grossinger with us today — past president of the Whitehorse Legion Branch 254. We have Rose Davies with us as well — a US veteran and also a Whitehorse Legion member. Thank you very much for being here today.

We have Peter Zwikirsch — my apologies for the pronunciation if I didn't do it justice. Peter is a Canadian Ranger, Whitehorse patrol. We have with us, as well, Al Parker, with the Canadian Rangers — thank you for being here today, sir — and Ken Putnam, with the legion.

Thank you very much for all of your service and for joining us here in the gallery today.

Applause

Pursuant to a November 15, 2021 Order of the House, the following comments made by Joseph Novak are included in Hansard

Mr. Novak: Mr. Speaker, may I have the procedure in the Legislature? I would like to say a few words if I may.

This is the medal. I accepted the nomination, but I told the general at the time that I will not accept the medal in the name of Corporal Joseph Novak; I accept it on behalf of all of the veterans from the east coast to the west coast, from the north to the south, including all of the aboriginal and all of the boys and girls who served overseas. When I see one of the white crosses daily in my mind — because I was told, when I joined the army — the commanding officer of the training camp said, “Boys — which you are boys — any reason can be found to take you out of the army, but nobody ever will take the army out of you.”

The army is completely in me. That’s why I appreciate the honours that are being bestowed to me in the name of all of the other veterans, not only myself; I’m not unique. All the boys and girls who served deserve the same attention that I have been getting up here.

As I said to a few friends lately — one of them called me from Montréal because he saw it on Facebook about my nominations, and he asked me, “Where do you live?” I said, “I live in Canada’s paradise.” He said, “What’s that? I never heard of that.” Well, I said, “Claude, you’ve never been to Whitehorse. If you come, come with only one thing in mind. Buy a one-way ticket, because once you get here and see what you see, you will not want to go back down south.” Thank you for listening to me.

Applause

Ms. White: I think we would be remiss not to recognize Terry Grabowski who is here in the gallery today with us. He is the living embodiment of the importance of intergenerational friendships. I think, from the outside looking in, that if it wasn’t for this friendship that happened, we wouldn’t know about the incredible service of Mr. Novak — that he has done such a good job of supporting his friend and bringing your service to the forefront. We’re grateful for that because we’re grateful for you, but we’re also grateful for the continued support and the advocacy that you do on behalf of veterans, so thank you so much for joining us today.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Remembrance Day

Hon. Mr. Silver: I want to thank Mr. Novak for his words. I would say that those are probably the most selfless words that have ever been uttered in the Legislative Assembly. I humbly put that forth for you, Mr. Speaker, and I completely agree with the one-way ticket concept. That’s the reason why half of us are here.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honour of Remembrance Day to pay tribute to the many courageous Canadians who have served on our behalf.

As we know, some of those brave individuals are with us here today in the gallery, and we are very grateful for their presence — brave individuals like retired Lance Corporal Joseph Novak, who served with the Canadian Army Service

Corps during the Second World War. Thank you, sir. Thank you for your service and for the impact that you made on behalf of Yukoners and on behalf of the rest of the country as well and for your selflessness. We are very grateful for your sacrifices, and we are very proud of your recent recognition by the French National Order of the Legion of Honour.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the attacks on 9/11, which was the starting point of our country’s longest war. Forty thousand Canadian troops would eventually serve in Afghanistan between 2001 to 2014, primarily in Kabul and Kandahar. Sadly, we lost 158 soldiers and seven civilians during this war. The others who returned had significant trauma, both physical and mental. Thank you for your words today recognizing that. Their sacrifices continue to serve as an example of courage and strength for others right across the country and across the globe.

In addition to fighting battles, our soldiers also built schools. They dug wells for clean water and they sought to give a whole generation of children an opportunity to experience freedom.

Tomorrow, across the country, Canadians will gather in school gymnasiums, in arenas, and around cenotaphs to honour those who have served and to remember — to remember those who did not return.

While many of the in-person aspects of Remembrance Day that Yukoners cherish will be reduced in order to protect our veterans and our community members from COVID-19, Yukoners will hopefully, regardless of where they are, remember — remember those who kept our country safe and kept our country free. We will remember the 66,944 Canadians who died in World War I, the 45,300 individuals who died during World War II, the 516 Canadians who died in Korea, and those who died in Bosnia, Somalia, and the Middle East. We will also remember the civilians who lost their lives during these terrible conflicts.

I encourage all Yukoners to participate in a moment of silence tomorrow, wherever you are. Wear a poppy and join your local legion, as we all come together in appreciation and memory of our great, great veterans.

Lest we forget.

Mr. Istchenko: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to this Remembrance Day, to those who have served or continue to serve our great country.

Over a century, hundreds of thousands of Canadians have earned enormous respect by answering the call to fight against tyranny and evil around the world in engagements such as World War I, the Korean War, World War II, Afghanistan, and many other international military operations. Today, we remember the courage and dedication of the Canadian men and women, some of whom are here today — Corporal Novak, Terry, Joe, Mr. Putnam, Red, Pete, and Rose — thank you. You fought gallantly over the years to defend our freedoms and rights, making it possible for us to live in a peaceful, democratic country where we enjoy one of the best qualities of life in the world.

Vimy Ridge defined our country. Ypres, Normandy, Sicily, Hill 355 in Korea, Kandahar — that is where so many made the ultimate sacrifice. In these battlefields, we honour and remember those who fought so gallantly. It is our duty to remember the Canadians in the past and who serve now who so selflessly defended our freedoms.

As we recall our proud history, let us also remember how early Canadians and First Nation and Métis people fought together like never before in the War of 1812 to repel the American invasion and help lay the foundation for an independent Canada.

Remembrance Day also provides an opportunity to pay tribute to the many sacrifices made by Canadian families who were forced to endure their loved ones being away at war and on dangerous missions abroad. We must support those on the front lines today, but also those who come home and transition back into regular life.

As a Canadian Forces member, I am honoured to wear a uniform that is recognized across the world as a symbol of courage and democracy. We can never repay the debt that we owe to the men and women who paid for our freedoms with their lives, but we can remember their sacrifices and pay tribute to their bravery and patriotism. As always, I would like to give a huge thank you to our local Legion Branch 254 for all you do for veterans and their families here in the Yukon and for ensuring that Remembrance Day continues to hold meaning for all Yukoners.

While Remembrance Day events will be scaled down significantly this year due to the recent restrictions, we are fortunate to be reminded daily of the sacrifices that our veterans made as we drive around our communities thanks to the lawn signs campaign by the organizers for Yukon Remembers. So, please wear a poppy.

At the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, Remembrance Day is when the country stops for two minutes of silence to pay respect to those who gave their lives and to our veterans who fought for our freedom. Lest we forget.

Ms. White: I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP in honour of Remembrance Day, of veterans past and present. Ceremony is such an important step in remembrance. It's one of the reasons we mark celebrations and important moments with ritual. Without large community gatherings in the Yukon tomorrow, it's more important than ever for individuals to remember the importance of November 11.

Yesterday, Legion 254 President Joe Mewett sent out a heartfelt message to members about the cancellation of the Remembrance Day ceremony at the Canada Games Centre, which reads — and I quote: “As veterans, our primary objective has always been to keep the public safe and help when necessary or called upon. We ask that you take time out of your day on 11th to remember the veterans who sacrificed so much for this great country. All veterans, their families and friends, will each remember in their own way, and it's unfortunate that we cannot get together as a community on this Remembrance Day, but please reach out to your fellow comrades, friends and family that may have a tough time on this day. It is important

that we look out for one another and strive to keep each other safe and healthy.”

For many veterans, Remembrance Day is every day. Mr. Speaker, it's for this and for so many more reasons that we cannot forget the importance of this day. Tomorrow, whether it's in a quiet moment watching the sun rise, climbing a hill to watch the ravens play, with a deep breath of November air, watching children play, or over a quiet cup of tea, it's important that each of us hold veterans and their families close.

Think about our grandparents, our friends, and our neighbours who served or continue to do so to afford us a life that we hold so dear. Remember their stories, share them with others, and honour them in the best way that we know how. We cannot forget the sacrifices, past and present, made on behalf of Canada. We owe our continued thanks and remembrance to veterans and their families. Lest we forget.

Speaker: I would like to ask all present to stand as we observe a moment of silence in honour of Remembrance Day.
Two minutes of silence.

Moment of silence observed

Speaker: I'm just going to read a short poem before we continue with the Order Paper.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

Thank you.

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?
Are there any reports of committees?
Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 5 — response

Hon. Mr. Silver: I rise today to respond to Petition No. 5. The petition urges the Government of Yukon to immediately rescind any and all requirements for mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations in Yukon, first announced on October 15, 2021. The short answer, Mr. Speaker, is no.

COVID-19 continues to spread and endanger the lives of our citizens. We need to take action to increase vaccination rates to keep Yukoners healthy and safe, and that is what the government is doing. The Yukon's acting chief medical officer of health has recommended mandatory vaccines for public servants and those working with vulnerable populations and requiring individuals to show proof of vaccination to access non-essential settings, like bars and restaurants. Science is our best guide when dealing with a pandemic, and we will continue to follow the recommendations of our public health experts.

I urge individuals who are hesitant about vaccines to speak to a nurse or a doctor about their concerns. The vaccines are safe and effective at preventing serious illness, including death. Vaccination is our best protection against COVID-19 and the fastest way out of this pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, I will note for the record the significant difference in position being taken by the Yukon Employees' Union and the Public Service Alliance of Canada's national component, which represents employees in the federal government — Canada's largest workforce.

The Public Service Alliance of Canada has noted publicly that employers have an obligation to keep workplaces safe — and I quote: “No one can be physically forced to get a vaccine against their will. However, according to the limited case law available, grievors must live with the consequences of refusing to get vaccinated.”

They go on to urge their members that the best and safest thing to do is to get vaccinated. That choice still belongs to individuals. Whether they want to be vaccinated or not, the choice is the individual's. Our choices do have consequences, however, and our individual actions have an impact on the health of our entire territory. Our government has a responsibility to protect the health and safety of all Yukoners, and we take that responsibility extremely seriously.

With regard to the petition itself, which was tabled by the Member for Watson Lake, it contains several duplicate signatures, as well as names of residents outside of the Yukon, and the name of a white supremacist who killed 51 people at a mosque in New Zealand in 2019.

The day the Yukon Party tabled the petition, there were several supporters outside the House, including one carrying a sign that said: “COVID is a hoax”. Ten Yukoners have died from COVID-19, Mr. Speaker — this is no hoax.

The leader of the protest was a former Yukon Party staffer and a former federal Conservative candidate. This is very disappointing to see the Yukon Party embrace this group and their position. The events that day served to undermine our public health system, and the Yukon Party was only too happy to stand by that behaviour. Front-line health care workers have been subject to increasingly hostile behaviour in recent weeks, including verbal and physical abuse. It is absolutely irresponsible for any leader to embolden this behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, I would respectfully ask the NDP to take a clear stance on the public health measures that are being introduced to increase vaccination rates to protect Yukoners. Do they stand behind all of the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health — yes or no? We need to work together, as a territory, to limit the spread of COVID-19, to protect the health and safety of our family members, our neighbours, all of our Yukoners.

I respect the decision of Yukoners to sign a petition and to voice their opinion; that is democracy.

I believe that we are doing what is right to keep Yukoners safe, and our government will continue to be guided by science and the recommendations of public health experts.

Speaker: Are there any petitions to be presented?

Petition No. 6

Ms. White: I wish to present a petition today that reads: To the Yukon Legislative Assembly:
This petition of the undersigned shows:

THAT parents have been watching with increasing alarm the rising number of COVID-19 exposure notices at schools over the last number of weeks;

THAT the recent announcement by the Acting Chief Medical Officer of Health of the return of COVID-19 community spread to Whitehorse has heightened the fears of families with school-age children still too young to be vaccinated that there will be further growth in cases within our school system;

THAT it is necessary to be proactive in protecting students aged 5 - 11 who cannot yet be vaccinated against COVID-19;

THAT the health risks and interruptions to learning that result from potential exposure to COVID-19 are both avoidable and unacceptable, so it is necessary to use every tool available to keep classroom-based learning in place;

THAT the enactment of a mask mandate in schools under the Civil Emergency Measures Act is an important step, but on its own may not prevent school and classroom closures due to positive COVID-19 cases in schools;

THAT it is necessary to introduce further measures that allow classroom and school closures to be a last resort so to mitigate the significant negative social and economic impacts of classroom and school closures on Yukon families; and

THAT the Government of Yukon possesses a stock of rapid tests for COVID-19 that will expire if not used;

THEREFORE, the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Yukon to: (1) immediately implement rapid testing protocols at all Yukon schools where the epidemiological conditions suggest testing will help identify and limit COVID-19 infections, to align with actions taken in other Canadian jurisdictions, to manage COVID-19 caseloads in school populations; and (2) change the Yukon Communicable Disease Control's directives to require, rather than recommend, self-isolation for any unvaccinated staff or student who is considered a close contact of an individual infected with COVID-19, thereby establishing a consistent approach across all Yukon schools rather than downloading the responsibility onto teachers and administrative staff.

Mr. Speaker, it has 137 signatures.

Speaker: Are there any further petitions to be presented?
Are there any bills to be introduced?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Dixon: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the chair of the Standing Committee of Rules, Elections and Privileges to follow through on his commitment to call a meeting of that committee before November 12, 2021.

Mr. Cathers: I rise today to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education to live up to the government's commitment to provide Hidden Valley school parents with minutes from the September 22, 2021,

meeting at the school attended by the minister, department officials, RCMP, and parents.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to promptly follow through on the government's commitment to provide Hidden Valley school parents with a recording from the November 9, 2021, virtual meeting.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the chair of the Standing Committee of Rules, Elections and Privileges to follow through on his commitment to call a meeting of that committee before November 12, 2021.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to review its hiring policies to facilitate employment of veterans within the Government of Yukon.

Ms. Blake: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to reinstate hospital privileges for Yukon doctors and allow them to provide in-person support and be included in birth care teams at the Whitehorse General Hospital.

Ms. Tredger: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to conduct climate risk assessments that assess both the greenhouse gas emissions of and the risk of a changing climate to all new infrastructure projects.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

COVID-19 vaccination requirements

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Since Friday, November 5, we have confirmed more than 115 cases of COVID-19 in the Yukon Territory. Our active case count is over 150. We also have widespread and untraceable community transmission in Whitehorse. This means that there is a high risk of COVID-19 exposure throughout the city and increased risk in our rural communities.

To respond to this unprecedented spike in cases and increased risk of transmission, our government has declared a state of emergency under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. Declaring a state of emergency allows our government to implement new temporary measures that have been recommended by Dr. Elliott to rapidly reduce transmission and ensure that our health care system is not overwhelmed.

We are also fast-tracking the proof of vaccination requirements for designated settings to align with the new recommendations. As of this Saturday, November 13, Yukoners will be required to prove that you are fully vaccinated — that's two shots — to access a designated setting. The list of

designated settings has been finalized and will be available online today at yukon.ca. The list is based on the BC model, with Yukon-specific considerations, as recommended by the acting chief medical officer of health. For example, a proof of vaccination will be required to access personal services establishments, like hair salons.

Starting on Saturday, people will be required to show the paper or digital copy of their proof of vaccination credential, as well as a piece of government-issued photo identification, in order to access those establishments and services on the list of designated settings.

Yukoners can request their proof of vaccination credential online at yukon.ca/vaccine-proof. You can also access this service over the phone via the COVID-19 information line at 1-877-374-0425. This line is open seven days a week, 7:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

A Yukon-specific QR code reader app is being developed to support local businesses and organizations to verify vaccination status. The app will securely verify an individual's proof of vaccination credential. It will be able to read any QR code that follows the Government of Canada specifications for proof of vaccination credentials. The app does not need an Internet connection to verify QR codes and it will be available for free on app stores in the coming days.

We will be supporting our business community and other impacted organizations as we implement this requirement. Officials will be hosting information sessions for businesses and organizations on the new app starting this week. I want to thank the businesses that have already started to adopt these measures and that are working with their clientele to help them adjust. We ask that Yukoners are patient and respectful of businesses and organizations as they introduce these new requirements. Please remember that these measures are designed to protect public health and to keep us all safe.

Mr. Cathers: In rising today to respond to the ministerial statement on vaccination requirements as the Official Opposition critic for Health and Social Services, I want to first of all state that the Yukon Party Official Opposition encourages everyone who is eligible to get vaccinated against COVID-19. As the Leader of the Official Opposition stated previously, the Yukon Party caucus believes that vaccination is the best tool to protect Yukoners from COVID-19. We believe that the vaccines that are available to Yukoners are safe and effective and offer us the best opportunity to move forward beyond COVID-19. We urge all Yukoners to get vaccinated.

Like other health care decisions, vaccination should be based on the principle of informed consent. We thank everyone who has rolled up their sleeves and made that choice. We continue to have concerns and disagree with some parts of the government's policy. In a pandemic, public health measures are necessary, but they must be balanced and understand the negative, unintended consequences of those decisions. We also must continue to respect each other as Yukoners and show compassion for people who see things differently than we do. We are hearing from many Yukoners about their mental health

as they experience anxiety related to the possibility of losing their jobs a month before the holiday season.

I also want to make it clear that, when it comes to the health care sector, particularly our hospitals and continuing care facilities, there is a need to take an evidence-based approach to keep patients and providers safe. Patient safety and keeping our hospitals from being overwhelmed must be the top priority.

It is also important for government to treat health care employees who choose not to be vaccinated with fairness and compassion and to consider options, such as alternative job placements, if possible. The government also needs to provide our hospitals with significantly more financial resources.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard concerns from EMS and fire volunteers who provide coverage in rural communities on what this announcement will mean for coverage in rural Yukon. We are concerned that this will create gaps in coverage that the government needs to carefully consider. If gaps are created due to this announcement, government needs to step in to provide adequate coverage for emergency response.

We have heard about unintended consequences of this announcement impacting essential service workers in the health care sector through loss of childcare. We have also heard many concerns from businesses about lack of clarity in these rules. Yesterday, I sent a letter to the Minister of Health and Social Services and the Minister of Community Services with questions and concerns on behalf of businesses that are looking for clarity about what rules apply to them. These include clinics and businesses that have been trying to get answers from this government since mid-October and restaurant and bar owners who have outstanding questions that the government has replied to with a form letter that doesn't actually answer their questions. We have also heard from sports organizations that are seeking clarity on how to implement this and on what support will be available to them. Once again, the government could have done better.

While we agree with the need for specific measures to protect our health care sector and patient safety, we continue to have outstanding concerns with parts of this policy.

Ms. White: At the onset, I want to say that the Yukon NDP supports the vaccine mandate, but that doesn't mean that questions still don't exist. If the Premier has found our communications difficult to understand, he now knows how Yukoners have felt these last weeks and months about his government's COVID communication, especially since the mandate announcement.

It does make us wonder what took so long to explain further requirements, but instead of stewing on the mistakes of the past, let's look at life going forward. For weeks, we have been asking this government for more information regarding vaccine mandates. Small businesses and NGOs have been left with countless questions going unanswered, and just last week, I tabled a motion urging this government to communicate with NGOs and business owners. I asked that they communicate more details by November 10, which is today, so I guess with this morning's press conference, they are following through.

The only issue is that, when I decided on today's date, it was based around a deadline of November 30, and now the vaccine mandate has been pulled forward to start on Saturday. This leaves businesses with two and a half days to figure out how to implement these new requirements, and one of those days is Remembrance Day. Many businesses have been left with big questions about the logistics of how their small staff, sometimes of one person, can handle the burden of this on their own. To enforce a mask/vaccine mandate, businesses are worried that they will need to hire an extra employee to stand at a door checking vaccine status and ID. So, where are employees expected to find these extra employees in a time of such staffing shortages?

What about security? Every day we hear stories about violence and harassment directed towards employees in the Yukon and in other jurisdictions. Can the minister tell us how a staff of one person or how any staff is supposed to deal with this?

The minister spoke of a free QR code reader app that should be available in the next few days. Can the minister confirm that this app will be ready to download by Friday morning, giving businesses time to learn how to use it?

What is the plan for citizens who don't have smartphones? Will a printout of their vaccine status or one of the Yukon health blue vaccine cards suffice? Will government help them access these and make printouts, and if so, where should they go?

Proof of vaccination needs to be accompanied by ID, so what is the minister's plan to ensure that all Yukoners have sufficient ID by Saturday, November 13? Although this seems like a small thing to some, a government-issued photo ID costs \$30 and it takes about a month to receive it. Does the minister have a plan to cover the costs of these for those in need, or is the plan to just exclude our vulnerable population from accessing businesses and services that they may need?

Another question that we have heard is that personal services have been lumped in with bars, restaurants, and gyms. These types of establishments have had exposure notices several times while personal services have never had an exposure notice — zero times. Personal services deserve credit as they have been working hard for months to ensure the safety of their clients, so we thank them for all of their collective efforts in keeping their clients safe. We ask the minister why they are being grouped with restaurants and bars while their safety factor is very different.

What about NGOs? Many run near 100 percent with the help of volunteers. What systems of enforcement are in place for them? Will the organizations now be expected to keep detailed files on the vaccine status of all volunteers? Which organizations will be enforcing this and checking said files?

This is a lot to take in for all Yukoners. We are back in the danger zone; we are back in the state of emergency. People have so many questions, and with the Delta variant going rampant, people are worried. Yukoners are looking for leadership, and right now, it's hard to find.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: We know that these new measures are broad and will have significant impacts on Yukoners, but that is precisely the point. We need to act decisively to stop the spread of the virus in our territory. We need to be courageous, to make sacrifices, and to work together to protect the public health and well-being of all Yukoners and to ensure that our health care system is not overwhelmed.

Each and every Yukoner has a role to play in keeping our community safe. We truly hope that the requirements of these measures cause Yukoners to pause and to act kindly and respectfully toward one another. We need to keep in mind that our choices do have consequences — sometimes for others — and our individual actions have an impact on the health of our entire territory. This is not something that most people have ever had to face in their lives before, but they do now.

We strongly encourage everyone to get vaccinated, and since the vaccines have become available — not always been the case with respect to the opposition. I'm very happy to hear them today encourage people to be vaccinated. Vaccination remains the best protection against COVID-19 and the spread of this disease. It also reduces the chances of severe symptoms, including death, if you do get infected.

As I have noted earlier in my ministerial statement, there are supports for businesses and organizations. Training and information sessions are starting this week. NGOs are being supported. We all have a role to play in keeping our territory safe and healthy, and we need to be kind and helpful to each other because we are in this together.

I encourage all Yukoners to continue to practise the “safe six” and to continue to wear a mask when they are inside public places. We do have supports, again, working with local NGOs for our vulnerable persons — their identification. The cost of that identification will be covered.

We know that these measures work to prevent the spread of COVID-19. It is especially important to stay home if you are sick and to get tested. Our government introduced a paid sick-leave rebate program at the outset of the pandemic, and it is still available to employers and self-employed individuals. I encourage you to find details online at yukon.ca.

Yukoners need a strong and stable leadership to stop the spread of COVID-19 and to get us on the path to recovery. I ask all Yukoners to be respectful and thankful to our front-line health care workers. They are there to help us all.

Thank you to the members of this Assembly who are focusing on solutions for the Yukon Territory. We must continue to do everything to protect one another and to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: First Nation school governance

Ms. McLeod: Watson Lake and several other school communities will have a referendum in January 2022 about whether or not to eliminate their school councils and instead have their schools fall under the control of the new First Nation school board. School councils around the territory have made it

clear that they don't feel that the process has been well understood or well communicated by the Liberal government.

So, as this important vote will begin on January 11, 2022, what is the government doing to ensure that school communities are well informed about this referendum? What are they doing to ensure that those voting have all the information they need to make an informed decision?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I'm happy to stand and speak about the Yukon First Nation school board. Yukon's future prosperity will be built through strong partnerships with First Nations. This is especially true when it comes to education. Our government is committed to supporting all Yukon learners. Education is a key area of our reconciliation efforts, Mr. Speaker. We are working with partners to improve First Nation education and to ensure that First Nation perspectives are reflected in Yukon schools.

I wanted to start with that, as we enter into this discussion today on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. I will absolutely get to the answers to the questions that are on the floor, but I want to start with the motivation behind this first and to talk to Yukoners about the importance of First Nation education in this Yukon Territory.

Ms. McLeod: At an information session hosted by the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees, government officials committed to consider requests from school communities to support the hosting of town halls or other community meetings with the purpose of providing information to parents, teachers, and members of those school communities.

How many public town hall meetings will the Department of Education support in each school community that is going to referendum in January?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We have been working with the Chiefs Committee on Education on options for establishing a Yukon First Nation school board under the *Education Act*. We believe that this framework agreement and the establishment of the Yukon First Nation school board is an additional option to enable Yukon First Nations to meaningfully shape their children's education and improve their educational outcomes.

The process to establish a school board can start in two ways: by a school council resolution, which is what has happened in the five schools that have been mentioned here today in the preamble of the Member for Watson Lake's question; and another way is through a petition of electors in an attendance area submitted to me before December 13 in this process.

We know that there may be other school communities that will be potentially submitting petitions with 20 percent of their electors, but as of October 31, five school councils have passed resolutions to trigger a referendum. We are working very closely with Elections Yukon to conduct those referendums. We will be working toward ensuring that folks are informed about the information.

Ms. McLeod: You know, Mr. Speaker, as is common with this minister, she did not answer the question. My question was: How many townhalls will the government support?

Earlier this week, I asked the minister about what this process would mean for staff. According to the documents provided to school councils by the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, the new First Nation school board will have broad authority over staffing, including the hiring of principals and teachers as well as dismissals, discipline, promotion, and demotion. This has raised a lot of questions and concerns among our teachers.

Can the minister tell us what consultation has been done with the Yukon Teachers' Association and particularly teachers in schools that will go to referendum?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will continue with my answer around this, because I think it is vitally important that Yukoners are given the facts around this and know that there will be plenty of time for them to receive information to then make an informed decision about whether they support a Yukon First Nation school board in their catchment area. As I have stated, there are five school boards that have passed a resolution to move toward such a referendum.

We are working with the chief electoral officer around conducting these referendums. There will be information that will go to folks and there will be information sessions that will be held to ensure that everyone has accurate information as they make their decision to say yes or no to a Yukon First Nation school board in their catchment area.

I want to go back to the importance of this and the connection to reconciliation with Yukon First Nations in our territory.

Question re: Teacher staffing

Mr. Kent: Over the course of this Sitting, we have raised a number of concerns about the significant number of teacher vacancies in our schools and the shortages of teachers on call. Earlier this week, the Minister of Education said — and I quote: “We are ready to deploy certified teaching staff from the central administration building to assist schools...”

Can the minister tell us which schools will receive this support from the department?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I'm happy to talk about the challenges that are happening in our schools right now. Effective teachers are one of the most important factors in student success at school. We work to attract and retain the best educators that we can. I have spoken about this a few times during this Sitting in terms of some of the challenges that we have had in recruiting teachers from across Canada. I want to thank all of the administrators, educators, and staff who are working hard for the benefit of our students and all Yukoners.

I want to remind folks that this is the third school year impacted by COVID-19, and we acknowledge the stress of the pandemic and the fatigue that many are feeling. I have heard this first-hand. I have reached out to all of the school councils. I have been meeting with them. During the first two weeks of each month, I have had very late nights, meeting with school councils and hearing directly the impacts of teacher shortages in our schools.

We are working hard to fill the vacancies, and I will continue to build on my answer and talk about the deployment of Education staff to those schools.

Mr. Kent: As I mentioned earlier this week, what caught our attention was when the minister said that they were ready to deploy certified teaching staff from the central administration building to assist schools. As the minister mentioned, she has been meeting with a number of school councils recently, as have we. She has been hearing about the incredible strain, I am sure, that is on our teachers right now. Like us, she has probably been hearing that the Liberal government is not doing enough.

The lack of available teachers on call has meant that specialty teachers are often forced into action to fill in for absent teachers. Even principals have had to spend considerable time in classrooms, on top of attending to their regular duties. Teachers have asked us what the minister meant about deploying teachers from the department.

Which schools are eligible to receive this additional support from the department, and how will the department deploy these resources?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will continue on with the answer around the teachers on call. We are working with school communities to identify root causes with teachers on call availability and identify potential actions to address the situation. As of November 8, 2021, we have registered the number of teachers on call at 199 — 154 of those are in Whitehorse, and 45 are in the communities. We do have an additional 22 applications pending — 15 in Whitehorse and seven in the communities.

In terms of our current vacancies with teaching staff, we will continue to work to fill the vacancies until they are filled. Again, we are having a lot of difficulties attracting teaching staff to the Yukon right now, as we are in, as I have said, the third school year of the pandemic. I was in a call just last night with a school that is experiencing a lot of difficulties, and the school council has actually made a decision to go to full remote learning. I can tell you that departmental staff are working to fill the gaps there with them.

Mr. Kent: Everything the minister said is all very interesting, but it has nothing to do with what was asked.

What we are asking for and looking for answers about is regarding deploying teachers from the Department of Education, something that she mentioned earlier this week, which was that they were ready to deploy certified teaching staff from the central administration building to assist schools.

So, we know that many of the staff in the Department of Education belong to the Yukon Employees' Union, and substitute teachers are members of the Yukon Teachers' Association. Can the minister tell us what consultation has taken place with the Yukon Teachers' Association about deploying certified teachers from the department into the schools?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am really not sure if the member opposite is saying that he is supporting schools or not. I mean, I think that we are working hard with every single school community to ensure that they have what they need — to have

the supports that they need — and every school is different. I have a meeting with all the school communities. I know that we have more pressure in some schools than in others. As I have stated, we are working closely with each and every school community to ensure that they have the supports, and we will continue to do that, and deployment of departmental staff, if needed, will be done.

I can assure you that the Yukon Teachers' Association — our senior staff are in touch with them quite regularly, and I have met with the president of the Yukon Teachers' Association recently. I think that, in those discussions, Mr. Speaker, what I know is that we have the same interest, which is the well-being of our children.

Again, I would ask the members opposite to not politicize the issues within our schools.

Question re: Health care services

Ms. White: Two weeks ago, we asked the Minister of Health and Social Services to address the shortage of primary health care professionals, including doctors. With no walk-in clinic for the entire territory, there are thousands of people with nowhere else to go but the emergency department. There are people in the emergency department who just need a prescription refill. There are people in the emergency department who just need a blood test. Many people are in the emergency department because they have nowhere else to go for primary health care. One solution is right in front of us: open a public walk-in clinic. It is not a new idea; it is not even an original idea, and it is certainly not an NDP idea — plenty of other Canadian jurisdictions have them.

When will the minister listen to Yukoners and open a public walk-in clinic?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Our government is well aware that a local physician has closed their primary care practice and transitioned to working in an acute care system. We completely understand and recognize the concern of Yukoners that this closing of a single walk-in clinic here in Whitehorse has caused.

We have continued our conversations with the Yukon Medical Association. I have personally met with individual physicians to discuss their suggestions for how we might address this particular issue. Like many complex problems, it's not necessarily a matter for government to solve alone. We work with our partners, including the Yukon Medical Association, and their advice about how we might be addressing this situation.

We have implemented part of the *Putting People First* report, and we are moving forward with adding more nurse practitioners, expanding access to virtual care alternatives, and exploring other options for primary health care. I will no doubt continue with my answer.

Ms. White: While we appreciate the speaking notes we have heard before, there are people who are still waiting in the emergency department for basic health services.

I'm glad she mentioned nurse practitioners. One recommendation from the *Putting People First* report is to expand the scope of practice for nurse practitioners to have

hospital privileges. It would be an easy fix. Nurse practitioners in the hospital would mean more trained health professionals to see patients who are currently waiting in the emergency department. It would help doctors with the huge workloads they are facing right now, and it would mean more people with access to primary health care.

Nurse practitioners have hospital privileges everywhere else in Canada, and yet nurse practitioners in the Yukon have almost no power. Their scope of practice is narrow, and their case loads are slim.

When will the minister expand the scope of practice for nurse practitioners so that they can work in the emergency department?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Again, I appreciate the question and the opportunity to speak about our health care system here in the territory.

I will stop just for a second to address the concept of notes. Many members from the opposition, both the current speaker and others, have criticized us for having notes. I think, actually, it's our responsibility to come prepared to answer questions to Yukoners, and we should absolutely have our notes. We should have information that Yukoners are asking about through the opposition parties, and so, that criticism is always puzzling to me, that we do, in fact, come prepared and answer questions that are brought here on behalf of Yukoners.

The concept of nurse practitioners is one we absolutely must explore. The member opposite calls it "an easy fix". I appreciate that this is the perception here, but scope of practice and conversations about hospital privileges are something we work on with the Yukon Hospital Corporation. Certainly, members opposite will have the opportunity to ask the Hospital Corporation directly about that in the very near future, and I look forward to the next question.

Ms. White: This morning, I received an e-mail, and I know the minister received it, too. The person describes a situation that, unfortunately, we have heard before. Because of lack of primary care, this person has not been able to find proper mental health support. Their mental health situation deteriorated, and this person had to go to the emergency room.

I quote from the e-mail: "We spent a week trying to find any option other than emergency."

This person waited almost seven hours, most of the time alone, in a curtained room. When they were finally able to see a doctor and ask for paperwork to be completed and a referral for a psychiatrist, they were told "no". Even if they had a referral, they were told it would be a nine-to-12 month wait.

What does the minister suggest that these people do without a primary care provider and after they have exhausted every other available option to them?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would first like to take a moment to thank, respect, and acknowledge the work of our front-line health care workers, including those in the Whitehorse General Hospital emergency room. They are working night and day to serve Yukoners. Yes, they have seen an increase in individuals there for issues that need to be addressed. They are triaged properly, and the work continues. Unfortunately, that does mean that, sometimes, individuals have to wait. I am certainly

not commenting on the individual case brought up here, because I do not have knowledge, nor would I speak about it here on the floor of the House, even if I did.

Available and timely psychiatric services for Yukoners is a priority for this government. Referrals for psychiatric services can be made through an individual's general practitioner or, as noted, through the environment at the emergency room.

We now have, in total, three resident psychiatrists in the Yukon. In addition, there is a child psychiatrist embedded in Yukon's pediatric program. This is an absolute increase in our efforts to reduce wait times for private psychiatric care. We have increased the availability of these services for Yukoners.

Question re: Finlayson caribou herd management

Mr. Istchenko: In 2018, the Yukon government made the decision to close hunting of the Finlayson caribou herd for both outfitters and resident hunters. At the time, the minister made the argument that the decline in size of the herd necessitated such closures; however, the minister also made commitments to take action to help recover the herd. In an October 28 news article, a former minister said that the government would have what she called a "collective management plan" within six months. Then in November 2018, she told the Legislature that the closure would remain in place until they could come up with a long-term management plan.

Can the Minister of Environment tell us: What is the status of the development of a management plan for the Finlayson caribou herd?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: At the outset, I would commit to the member opposite to return to him and to the House with the future plans with respect to the closure of the Finlayson caribou hunt, but I would also advise as follows: The Department of Environment is committed to collecting robust data to make high-quality, up-to-date information available for decision-making. We are planning to collect data, as I said yesterday, in four moose surveys for the lower Stewart River, Whitehorse south, Teslin River, and Sifton-Miners areas combined. These four moose surveys will cover an area of over 30,000 square kilometres. We are also planning to collect data in relation to several caribou herds, including a census in the Coal River, a collar deployment in the Wolf Lake area, and a range assessment for Clear Creek.

Aside from moose and caribou, we are also conducting surveys this year for our other harvested species like wolves, deer, and fish, as well as non-harvested species like pika, bat, and ground squirrels. Biologists from the Department of Environment use this data in combination with available harvest information to make decisions about harvest allocation and the sustainability of wildlife populations.

I will continue my response shortly.

Mr. Istchenko: I do thank the minister for that answer. I look forward to — hopefully the minister will table that plan in the Legislative Assembly before the end of this session.

The minister was just speaking about science-based management plans for many of the wildlife populations, and it sounds like they are gathering some scientific data and

population estimates. Specific to the Finlayson herd, what actions has the minister taken to gather this new information?

If those new studies do indeed — if the minister has been privy to them — show that the herd is in decline — and what actions has the minister taken to begin the recovery of the herd? Most important is the recovery of the herd, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As indicated in my first response to the Member for Kluane, I will certainly commit to return to indicate the data that I have from my department with respect to the perceived health of the Finlayson caribou herd and whether there is a prospect for the hunt to open in the foreseeable future. Certainly, as I indicated in my response yesterday, I will always be guided by the best available information which exists. I have certainly directed my department to employ the resources that we can bring to bear to come up with the most robust data that we can to inform our decisions with respect to the various hunt areas, whether it's moose, caribou, or the other species that I've mentioned.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the wildlife surveys and data collection, the Department of Environment conducts ecological assessments to better understand the Yukon landscape, the habitat needs for fish and wildlife, and the potential impacts of human activities and a changing climate. These assessments are essential in interpreting the results of wildlife surveys and data collection and in forecasting the long-term viability of wildlife populations. We prioritize which areas to survey based on a combination of factors, including harvest levels, access, community concerns, land use, planning needs, planning data needs, how long it has been since an area was last surveyed, and human activities taking place —

Speaker: Order.

Mr. Istchenko: So, the reason I'm asking these questions is because, since 2018, the hunting community has been waiting to see some action from the government on the development of this new management plan for the Finlayson caribou herd. There have been concerns that the government was quick to shut it down, but they have been slow to take action to gather information, develop a plan, and start helping the herd to recover.

Will the minister commit to a date for the development of a recovery plan for the Finlayson herd? When can we expect to see some real action to help this herd recover?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the Member for Kluane. I'm not in a position today to provide the response to the member as to when the hunt may reasonably resume based upon the best available data. The member opposite will know that I was not in this chair in 2018, but I certainly will commit to review the history of the first closure and the steps which have been taken since 2018.

We hope to rehabilitate the numbers and provide the member opposite and the House data we have with respect to the numbers and whether it is that the hunt can in fact be responsibly opened in the foreseeable future. I thank the member opposite for his questions.

Question re: Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport reopening of international travel

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, last week the Government of Canada announced that they were easing restrictions on international flight arrivals. According to that release, international flights carrying passengers will be permitted to land at eight new Canadian airports that have previously been shut down.

Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works tell us if there have been discussions about opening Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport to international visitors, and if so, when would we expect an announcement about that?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I thank the member opposite for her question. I think that the short answer to this is that I do not have information with respect to any short-term plans for the welcoming of international travelers to the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport. The member opposite will know that, at its strictest enforcement, there may have been four international gateways across Canada. That was recently expanded. Another four gateways were opened within the last month or so. Whitehorse was not in the second tranche of consideration.

I will certainly review what the status is with respect to consideration of the so-called smaller volume airports. For the benefit of the House, if there was to be a resumption — we hope that there will be a resumption — of, for instance Condor flights in mid to late May 2022, we would certainly hope that the issue of international arrivals will have been resolved for Whitehorse far in advance of that date.

Ms. Van Bibber: The press release from the Government of Canada says that the airports that have recently been reopened to international visitors are working in cooperation with the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Canadian Border Services Agency, and Transport Canada to implement the measures to start safely welcoming international passengers.

What action is the Department of Highways and Public Works taking to ensure that our international airport is ready to welcome passengers, and what new measures will they be putting in place?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The first answer that I will give to the Member for Porter Creek North is that, yes, we will advocate, certainly vigorously, on behalf of the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport with our federal counterparts so that we are considered for approval for international travel well in advance of the time that it would be anticipated that we would have any meaningful international travel. Obviously, there could — I suppose, in theory — be flights from the panhandle and from Alaska, but that is not, to my understanding, a significant volume. The larger concern would be the summer potential resumption of travel from Europe and specifically from Germany via Condor. Yes, I will commit to the House and to the member opposite to advocate strongly on that behalf.

With respect to measures at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport, health and safety is a priority at all Yukon airports. As of October 30, 2021, Transport Canada implemented new rules for the federally regulated

transportation sector. These rules impact passengers and workers at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport. I will continue in my third response.

Ms. Van Bibber: The Government of Canada indicated that they are working closely with airports and aviation operators to ensure that appropriate procedures are put in place to protect travellers and workers. Here in Yukon, we know that the tourism industry has expressed a lot of interest in the activity.

Has the Minister of Highways and Public Works held any discussions with the tourism industry about the reopening of the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Our protocols have been — inside of our caucus and within Cabinet — that most conversations, if not all, with the tourism industry have been led by the Department of Tourism and Culture and those responsible for it.

There are two areas we have been focused on. One is watching what is happening with air travel, as my colleague has touched on — the first tranche that was announced and now the second tranche — as we look toward what is going to play for the summer of 2022. I have spoken in the House. There have been some changes with the Condor flights, on what they will be arriving, but again, they continue to book. We are looking to see the signals from Canada and what will happen on that third tranche.

Also, I think it's important to note, we are engaging with Destination Canada, the Crown corporation that leads the conversation on tourism, but also with a multitude of partners and with PNWER. We are actually looking at having discussions with representatives, the state senator from Alaska, as well as MLAs and ministers from BC, because we do have concern as well about the effects on border crossing and what will happen with the cruise ship industry.

Those are the two things right now that the department is focused on. We know we have about 90,000 visitors into the Southern Lakes in the summertime, out of approximately one million visitors. Once again, we will be making sure we support the industry and make sure we have a thriving tourism industry in 2022.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed. We will proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Motion No. 200

Clerk: Motion No. 200, standing in the name of Ms. White.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Leader of the Third Party:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to make Naloxone nasal spray publicly available and free of charge at front-line agencies, government facilities, and pharmacies.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I am hoping today that this can be one of the conversations that we have had in this Chamber before where we have talked about hard things and come together to make right decisions — things like PrEP coverage, things like trikafta. This is an important thing along those same lines.

Back in 2017, the Government of Yukon took a step in the right direction of harm reduction by making intramuscular injection of Naloxone publicly available and free of charge. This happened because the opioid crisis was emerging in the Yukon, and it was recognized that Naloxone kits can help save lives. So, here we are four years later, in 2021, and the Yukon has broken yet another devastating record of overdose deaths.

It is with deep sadness that I recognize the many people who we have lost to overdose — grandmothers and grandfathers, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, and sons and daughters. Each and every death reflects a life that was cut short. Each reflects a loss to a family and community in the Yukon.

In an August press conference held by the Yukon's coroner, there were 14 confirmed overdose deaths — all involving fentanyl — between January 1 and that date. Mr. Speaker, the year isn't over yet, and if we continue on that trajectory, we are almost certain to be at a point where Yukon will have surpassed the deaths of even those in British Columbia.

The community has experienced a spate of tragic and preventable losses in recent weeks — young lives — young women gone too soon. In response to the ever-increasing numbers of overdoses, a letter urging the adoption of a new tool was sent to the government and opposition parties this week. The letter was signed by Grand Chief Peter Johnston, Blood Ties Four Directions, the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, Safe at Home Yukon, the Yukon Status of Women Council, Yukon Women's Transition Home, Challenge Disability Resource Group, Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, and the food bank. Mr. Speaker, I tabled that letter in this House.

It asks that Naloxone nasal spray kits be made publicly available and free of charge, just like the injectable kits have been since 2017. It's important to note that the intranasal option was not yet available in 2017 when the take-home Naloxone program was first announced and rolled out. Today, I am asking my colleagues in the Liberal Party and the Yukon Party to support this important initiative and vote to make Naloxone nasal spray available under the take-home Naloxone program. At present, some Yukoners can even get them covered under a drug plan at the pharmacy.

Mr. Speaker, a number of weeks ago, I discovered that, as a Yukon government employee, under our drug coverage through Great-West Life, we can get Naloxone nasal spray covered at up to 80 percent. The challenge is that, of course, we need a prescription from a doctor, which means an individual has to contact a doctor to get a prescription and then take it to a pharmacy to have it filled. The cost of those prescriptions varies anywhere from \$220 to \$300 — is what I found.

People receiving social assistance can sometimes get Naloxone nasal spray from the pharmacy, but we know that

many people who use drugs are not getting their Naloxone from the pharmacy. We understand that the program is spotty, only some people will get approved under social assistance, and not all pharmacists are on the same page.

We understand that there is still so much stigma associated with drug use that many people don't want their health care providers to know that they use drugs. Non-insured health will cover it in some cases, but again, there is stigma, and access is spotty.

There are also many Yukoners who are not on social assistance and cannot afford to purchase it from a pharmacy. Again, Mr. Speaker, under my coverage, I was able to buy it for \$50, instead of the \$300 that it retails for — cost is a barrier.

We know that access to Naloxone nasal spray is not a low barrier. Many people struggle to access these programs or a pharmacy at all. We also understand that there is no access to this important drug in rural Yukon. People must travel to Whitehorse to get it from the pharmacy.

So, folks might be wondering how the injection Naloxone kits are made available currently. I think that's a great question. Kits are purchased by the Mental Wellness and Substance Use team and distributed free of charge to Blood Ties Four Directions and other social service NGOs, to pharmacies, and to rural health centres. It is the belief of front-line service providers that Yukon government should be making the nasal spray available in the same way.

Mr. Speaker, I started talking about the opioid crisis, I think, really a lot more frequently in 2016. That was after I was contacted by a mother whose son and his girlfriend had used drugs in their basement. They had overdosed. He didn't pass, but she did. The mother reached out to me to talk about how important it was. I think one thing that I've said often in this House is that there is no one type of drug user. One of the problems is that there is so much stigma associated with drug use that people don't talk about it as openly as I think they should, which is why I started talking about it in this House and why I talk about it all the time.

Mr. Speaker, I went and got my training as soon as that program was announced — the take-home Naloxone program. I went to Blood Ties Four Directions. Jesse showed me how to inject an orange — you know, you go through the motions and you practise and you fill the needle and you inject the orange. I did all those things. I carried around a kit in my car. It was in my car in the summertime; I took it out in the wintertime. I carried it in my basket. I carried them for years. I would replace it when it expired; I would go get a new one.

And then this summer, I got myself an e-bike, and so I started riding my bike to work, and I came across my first overdose. It's the first time I ever — first time. So, I talked about it a lot. I talked about the importance of making sure people were supported, because I really believe it, even though it had never been something that I had to deal with. I tell you, I watched this person go to the ground, and he was so lucky, because he had two people with him. They obviously knew what to do — they knew.

He sent his partner — she ran to the shelter to go and get a kit. I didn't have a kit; I didn't have a kit with me, and so I went

to the Woodcutter's Blanket, and I interrupted a conversation at the bar, and they handed me their Naloxone kit, and I went back. So, there is a young person lying on the ground who is being supported, and at this point, other people have come around. I think that is really important that we know that there are helpers everywhere, Mr. Speaker — there are helpers. So, this young person is on the ground, and he is surrounded by people. He has now, at this point, had three injections; the ambulance has been called, and the situation is under control.

I think about the young person who was the first responder, and he said, "I left my nasal spray at home; I never leave my nasal spray at home." I didn't have it, and he was beside himself because he was worried about his friend — he didn't have what he would normally have, and all I could think about was, even if I had that needle kit in my bag at that point in time, would I have been able to fill the vial and then inject it? Would I have been able to do that? I'm not sure.

Since this program rolled out in 2017, Mr. Speaker — I am older; I wear reading glasses now to do anything up close. I can't fix my bike without reading glasses, because I can't see the parts, because my arms aren't long enough, and so, could I have filled that vial without reading glasses on? I don't know; I mean, I could have tried — I would have tried, for sure. Let's be clear: I would have tried, but I didn't have a kit with me. I ride down the river trail every day now, twice a day, and all of a sudden, I was without a kit. I thought, man, I have been talking about this for such a long time. It is so important that, when the opportunity arose, I asked the Liberals to partner — to make sure that we made a supervised consumption site happen and that together we made safe supply happen, because of how important I think it is — but I had never seen an overdose; I had never been involved, and so I was super upset. I left this place — the ambulance came, and the young person was coming to.

We talk about stigma, and I can tell you — he said, "I was just having a nap; I was just having a nap." He didn't want to get in the ambulance; he was just having a nap. I can tell you that is not how we nap, but because there is still so much stigma associated, he didn't want that; he didn't want that.

I left that spot, and I was like, okay, I am going to Blood Ties Four Directions; I am going to go get myself a new kit, and then I realized, because the Yukon government has done such a good job about making these kits available, I will go to the pharmacy — and I did.

I went to a pharmacy, and I walked in, and I saw my friend, the street nurse, and he said, "How are you?" Mr. Speaker, sometimes I am super honest, and I said, "I'm really not well; I'm pretty rattled", and he said, "Why?" And I said, "I just saw my first overdose." And he said, "Yeah, it's tough, right?" And I said, "Yeah, yeah, it is tough."

And then he said, "You're a person of means; you should look at getting the nasal spray." And I was like, "Yeah, okay."

So, I walked up to the counter, and I talked to my friend, the pharmacist, and I said, "Can you tell me about the Naloxone nasal spray? Can you tell me what this means?" She said, "Just a second", and she opened up my file, and she said, "Your drug

plan will cover it, 80 percent. Instead of costing you \$300, it will cost you \$50." And I said, "Great, sign me up."

At that point in time, the pharmacist and I couldn't decide if I needed a prescription from a doctor or if the pharmacist could prescribe it. So, I went away, and she gave me homework. She said, "Call your provider and ask them: Does it need to be prescribed by a doctor or can a pharmacist prescribe it?"

I did that, and I was told that a pharmacist could, and when she contacted them, she was told a doctor had to. So, that's also another barrier. Since that time, I called my doctor, and I got a prescription and I took it in, but life-saving drugs shouldn't be dependant on whether or not you can get a prescription, on whether you have access to a doctor. Heaven forbid you should have to go to an emergency room to ask for that right now.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank everyone who has gone out and taken the injection training and who carries a kit with them, because carrying that kit is an act of love, because you care enough about helping someone else. I want to thank the people who aren't using alone, because right now, we know the worst thing that can happen is you using alone, and that's some of the tragedy that we have seen in this territory.

I want to thank the people who are being safe, who are choosing not to use alone, and who are using with groups or with friends, and I want to thank those groups and those friends for having kits, because it's their love that is going to save their community.

We know that there are lots of people who aren't willing to inject a needle into another person, much less a total stranger, and I can tell you, faced with it myself, it was rattling. I would have done it, but it was uncomfortable. Needles are stigmatized, and they are especially stigmatized for folks who use drugs. Needles are often seen as dangerous, and that's why we have all the sharps containers in bathrooms around the territory, because needles are inherently dangerous.

What I'm asking today of my colleagues is — I want them to help ensure that we have a low-barrier, readily available supply of intranasal Naloxone doses available to Yukoners across the territory and in every community and in every health centre so that the Naloxone nasal spray reaches every corner of the territory.

Mr. Speaker, if we make Naloxone nasal spray available, more overdoses can be reversed, because not all overdoses lead to death. It's important to know that.

Mr. Speaker, this motion is about equipping as many people as possible with a life-saving tool because this motion is about preventing death. When we talk about harm reduction, it's important to note that what we are talking about is preventing death. It's not about sobriety; it's not about teetotaling; it's about preventing death.

So, Mr. Speaker, I believe that this is an easy fix and I know that it will make a huge difference because we know, and the community knows, that making Naloxone nasal spray available will save lives.

I'm looking forward to hearing from my colleagues. I'm hoping that we have unanimous support for this motion so that what we do here is an act of love for people around us, because,

again, harm reduction is that — it's an act of love. Even if it might seem a bit odd, it's a way that we show people that we care. I look forward to hearing from my colleagues.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would like to begin by thanking the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for bringing forward this motion.

To start with, I would like to say that I support the motion. I'm going to talk about a few things today with respect to it. I will start with this notion that we should try to protect people. The opioid crisis has been horrific on the country and on the Yukon. If this is a good way to try to help address this, then I think that it makes this important.

I had to try to do a bunch of research on the Naloxone nasal spray. I didn't know about it. I did know about the injection. The member opposite, in her introduction of this motion, talked about the work that Blood Ties Four Directions is doing. They held — at the end of August, I think, there is a day that was International Overdose Awareness Day — a public event down at LePage Park downtown.

I saw quite a few politicians there that day — some colleagues, but also some folks running in the federal election. I can't remember whether or not that election had started, but there were a lot of people there. It's good to see folks getting informed. This was when I got trained about using the Naloxone injection.

My home is in Marsh Lake, but during the week, I usually spend my time here in Whitehorse. I stay in a basement apartment, my mother-in-law lives above, and I happen to be right across the street from our first Housing First project. I watched the old group home being taken down, and I watched the new Housing First project being built. I have gotten to know folks from across the street over time. One of the things that has happened is that there are occasions when there has been a need for me to call for an ambulance and help people out. I thought that, yes, I should be trained in this. I keep the kit right there by the basement window, which looks over Housing First. When I get up in the morning and I look out, if I see something — or if on my way walking here to the Legislature, I see something — then it's right there.

I want to give a shout-out to Blood Ties Four Directions. That day was really informative. We didn't inject into an orange; we injected into this sort of foam ball. It was great. I have to say that I was really surprised because there is this thing that happens where the needle retracts. There is a spring load where you do this thing and it pulls the needle back, but I didn't see that action. What I thought was happening was that it was breaking it off into the ball itself. I thought to myself, "How can you do this into someone's thigh where the needle would be left in there?" I gasped, and the person who was training me said that it was okay and that the needle came back. I was like — oh, okay.

I have not had an occasion to need to use it since I got trained at the end of August, but I do feel that it is important to have that. I have seen people over the years who are just sort of resting there on the ground. I have called an ambulance and hung out with them to try to make sure that they are okay.

Another thing that I will just mention — in that training that was given to me, the person who was talking to me from Blood Ties Four Directions said to not be surprised if the person, as they respond to the injection, becomes a little — not just disoriented — but they can have a negative reaction when they wake up.

First of all, of course, they are going through a traumatic moment, but they don't necessarily know me. They are not oriented to who I am and what I am doing there and why I would be standing next to them. The fellow from Blood Ties Four Directions said that they might get up and run away. Try to talk to them. Try to tell them you are there to help and stuff like that, but if they run away, okay, it happens.

When the Member for Takhini-Kopper King was presenting her arguments about the Naloxone nasal spray, she was talking about this notion of protecting people and harm reduction. She also talked about the shame of people around drugs and needles. It is a tough, tough thing, as a society. I am really glad that we have opened the safe consumption site. I hope that it becomes a safe injection site as it is able. These are really important things.

I think that if we have a nasal spray, that is even less complicated for those of us who would be more used to it than needles. Needles themselves can be frightening, so that is great. All of those things are good.

It's not a concern that I have around my support for this motion, but I am just going to talk a little bit about how we work and our process here as MLAs and these types of motions. I was looking back to try to look at this issue, and I started thinking about all of the motions that we have brought forward over time to try to improve our health care — by bringing forward motions here. One of the things on the list, of course, has been opioids. We have discussed that in motions here previously, but we have also talked about some of the big initiatives like aging in place and *Putting People First*. We have talked about funding for health. We just recently had a motion brought forward by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin about reviewing our social assistance program.

We talked about diabetes and the strategy around it. We have talked about continuous glucose monitors. We have talked about medical travel, and, of course, we have talked about COVID-19. I'm not talking about tourism and culture, which is important, but I am talking about the health sides of COVID-19, including vaccines. We have had all these conversations.

When I think about these types of issues, as I was researching last night — nasal Naloxone — and today, knowing that the motion was coming forward, I looked across at other jurisdictions and tried to find out who is using the nasal spray and who is not, and where it is provided and where it is not, and what the trend is.

That type of analysis is almost always done by government. If there was time to do more, I am sure that we would have done that analysis. One of the things about opposition motions that come forward every second Wednesday is that, while we know that there is a list of motions — I think that it is about 150 long. When I looked at it yesterday, there were about 140, but we have added a few more

today, so there are a lot of motions on there. It is not possible to research them all. Of course, we get some heads-up — what is currently an issue — and I think that opioids are definitely a very important issue that has been with us all along, but even lately there has been some additional concern.

I think to myself that, when I am taking decisions around health care, I would like to talk to health care professionals. I am not a health care professional. I don't know of any of us in here who are — although, as many Yukoners, people have varied backgrounds and maybe there is that background with someone, but I am not sure. I think that it is really important that we get that professional advice. In this case, when I looked at this issue, I thought to myself that this is pretty straightforward and I don't see the downsides. But I do want to talk about the importance of us trying to speak with health care professionals when we are talking about health care issues. If we are talking about building a bridge, we should talk to an engineer. If we're talking about lawsuits, we should talk to lawyers.

These are things that we would get that professional advice — that experiential advice — from people who are working on the front lines, like Blood Ties Four Directions, et cetera.

There have been two examples lately that I have thought about where I have thought that I would really like to hear from health care professionals. I am going to briefly talk about those two examples and why I think that it is so important that we seek that advice so that we don't misstep, as MLAs, when we're here trying to do the right thing, trying to help Yukoners, trying to support them and make them safer and as well as we can and reduce their harm.

One example comes from the petition that was tabled today, which was talking about parents who suggest that we should have rapid tests for COVID. I heard yesterday when the Leader of the Official Opposition also brought forward questions and expressed a need for this. Earlier today, I listened to the chief medical officer of health, when she was talking publicly to Yukoners, now as we're back in a state of emergency and the risks that we are facing have increased as of late. She talked about rapid tests — and why not? She said — and I am not going to get this exactly right — that we have a high-quality testing system right now and that we, the territory, use some rapid testing, but they concentrate where there are symptoms and where there is the possibility of spread.

Again, I will try to listen to the recording of the livestream to make sure I have this right — but if you use rapid testing where you don't believe that you have spread, one of the things that you do is set people up, because the testing is not perfect, and you have some false positives or some false negatives. There is a difference in the quality of that testing, if it's done by health care professionals or if it's done by you or I, Mr. Speaker. If we are doing the testing, we wouldn't know. Then, if you get a false positive, you are trying to run that down and could overwhelm the rest of the testing system, which you want to keep available to support those Yukoners who are symptomatic — so, there are risks.

I don't think that I would have thought that through, but there is the health care professional, and I think that it's really

important that we be thoughtful, as we look at this motion on the Naloxone nasal spray, that we are not doing something that would inadvertently create a problem that we don't perceive, because we are not health care professionals.

The other example that I'll give is around testing, again, and it was — as we brought forward the recommendations on October 15 from the chief medical officer of health that our employees of the public service should be vaccinated, we reached out to the union, and the union said to us, "We think that you should allow for testing in place of vaccination." We turned around and talked to the chief medical officer of health, and when I met with the union, when I sat down to talk with them, I said to them, "Shouldn't we should ask for that health advice, because you and I are not health professionals?" — we should ask.

We did; we went to the acting chief medical officer of health and asked her if testing was a strong alternative or a way, rather than vaccination. The chief medical officer of health basically said no. So, we are trying to set up a meeting with the acting chief medical officer of health and the president of the unions so that they can talk directly to each other and hear that advice back and forth, but that is what led us to this question about leave without pay.

Even today — somewhere, maybe it was on the radio — Dr. Ryan Warshawski was on the radio this morning —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Leader of the Third Party, on a point of order.

Ms. White: I fail right now to understand how talking about the vaccine mandate is at all reflective of a Naloxone motion, and I would reference Standing Order 19(b)(i), the question under discussion.

Speaker: The Government House Leader, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: What I had tried to point out earlier, as I was talking about the importance of us, as we debate things like Naloxone here, that there is also an importance for us to discuss with health care professionals, and I was using these as examples. I will work to get back to the Naloxone pretty quickly here.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: There is no point of order.

Would the Government House Leader continue with the topic?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will try to be brief on this second example and get back to the nasal Naloxone.

I think I was talking about Dr. Warshawski, who I think is the president of the Yukon Medical Association. He was on the radio this morning. The question that came from Elyn Jones in the interview was, "Aren't you worried, from a health care perspective, that when we bring in the requirement for vaccination for Yukon government public servants, that you would end up with some areas where you don't have a service

provision?" I think we had a question on that today in Question Period. Dr. Warshawski said that, right now, we have the risk of COVID spreading through the territory, which will definitely disrupt service. It's a very challenging question. Of course, we care about that question, but the health professionals have this other perspective that it's important to get, which brings me back to nasal Naloxone.

When I did my research last night on this topic, my sense is that it is a pure win, that it would just help improve harm reduction, but I don't know what the costs are. The member opposite has had some experience talking with the pharmacists in an effort to try to help support Yukoners, which I appreciate. Through that, there is a cost, but we have just not had this opportunity to talk to Health and Social Services, or other allied agencies, to try to understand this, but the principle that is put before us in the motion, I think, is solid. If this is a more accessible means and a better means, in some instances, and given that it is addressing the opioid crisis, I think it is important that we move in this direction.

I appreciate the motion, as put forward by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, and I'm supportive of this motion. I look forward to hearing from the Official Opposition as well.

I think the next steps, naturally, will be for the Minister of Health and Social Services to reach out to her department, if she hasn't already had a chance, to try to find out what some of the logistics are of this. I think it is important that we be thoughtful here in the Legislature, that we aren't inadvertently, in our attempt to make things better for Yukoners, doing something without some of that professional advice, because we don't have that specific knowledge.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, we agree very much that the opioid crisis is a serious concern for all Yukoners and certainly agree that more can be done to combat opioid deaths. I appreciate the Leader of the Third Party's comments about how she believes making the nasal Naloxone spray more available will help with that. As such, we agree with the motion and agree with proceeding with this.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I'm happy to stand today to speak to Motion No. 200. I thank the Leader of the Third Party for bringing this motion forward and giving us an opportunity to share our commitment to addressing this very important issue to Yukoners. I thank you for the personal stories, and I thank my colleague, as well, for sharing personal stories about how this is connected to our lives and the importance of supporting Yukoners, wherever they're at.

I'm going to take it in a little bit of a different direction, so please bear with me a little bit on this. To my colleagues, I want to speak to Yukon's missing and murdered indigenous women and girls strategy, and its vital calls to action described within, as well as the important initiatives regarding community safety and wellness.

The Yukon strategy is in response to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and their final report, *Reclaiming Power and Place*, released on June 3, 2019, which acknowledges the contribution of the

commissioners of the national inquiry in bearing witness to the truth and part of the historic relationship between indigenous peoples and Canada, their critical role in hearing from families and calling for justice. The final report acknowledges genocide and identifies four pathways that continue to enforce historic and contemporary manifestations of colonialism and lead to additional violence, and they are: (1) historic and multigenerational and intergenerational trauma; (2) maintaining the status quo and institutional lack of will; (3) social and economic marginalization; and (4) ignoring the agency and expertise of indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQIA people.

The Yukon strategy, Mr. Speaker, addresses all four of these pathways to violence and maps out four corresponding paths to dignity and justice. They are: strengthening connections to supports; community safety and justice; economic independence and education; and community action and accountability.

The vision of *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ Strategy* is to ensure healthy, safe, and violent-free communities where indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus Yukoners are respected, inherently valued, and treated equitably with dignity and justice.

This vision is supported by a number of foundational values, which are: culture, language, spirituality, and relationship with the land, Yukon First Nation and other indigenous values and principles, truth and reconciliation, self-determination, and indigenous self-government. There are a number of implementation principles that I will get into a little bit as I move through. They include: inclusivity and interconnection, equity and equality, sustainability —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Leader of the Third Party, on a point of order.

Ms. White: Although I appreciate that the minister said to bear with her as she was going to come around to the point, at this point, we have been going for eight minutes without talking about Naloxone or nasal sprays. I am just wondering if this is really speaking to the matter at hand or if it is of other things.

Speaker: Minister of Education, on the point of order.

Hon. Ms. McLean: On the point of order, I am laying out a foundation for the systemic issue that we are talking about here today. I will move my comments into Naloxone, which is an emergency tool that is addressing these absolutely systemic issues that we are facing.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Could the members who are speaking to the motion please remain on topic to the motion? Thank you.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am deliberately taking us down a bit of a trail here because the goals of the strategy on missing and murdered indigenous

women and girls — the Member for Watson Lake may find it funny. I did hear her laughing during the last comments. It is not funny. It's not funny at all.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Member for Lake Laberge, on a point of order.

Mr. Cathers: The minister, I believe, is in contravention of two Standing Orders: 19(g), imputing unavowed motives to another member; and 19(i), using insulting language. The Member for Watson Lake, who the minister just spoke disparagingly of, was laughing at how far off-topic the minister was in her content. She certainly appreciates the subject matter. It was also a surprise that the minister is choosing to speak to matters that are very far off the main topic of the motion.

Speaker: The Government House Leader, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, the member is suggesting that there are false or unavowed motives. I think that the minister is just referring to responses that are here in the Legislature. There is no abusive or insulting language. I think that this is just a dispute among members.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: On the point of order, if a member has an issue with another member's laughter, it is my job as the Speaker to make a determination as to whether or not there is a point of order.

Can we please refrain from bringing forward a member's action on the floor? We will leave that up to me to call a member to order when they are out of line.

Can we please stick to the topic of the motion that is at hand? Thank you.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will do that, absolutely. I have the utmost respect for you and as Chair.

Again, the reason I'm going down this path is to point to the systemic issues of opioid use in our territory and throughout Canada.

The goals of the strategy for our MMIWG2S+ strategy is: to implement coordinated and effective violence prevention and intervention and crisis response across Yukon that contribute to safer and healthier communities for indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people, and violence against all indigenous people in Yukon, in particular women and girls and two-spirit-plus Yukoners; to increase the economic independence of indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people; and to increase public awareness and engagement with the community in ending violence against indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people.

Providing publicly available and free nasal Naloxone spray is an emergency tool to address opioid-related overdoses in Yukon. We know that the majority of opioid users in Canada are indigenous men; however, we also know that the experience of trauma — and especially the intergenerational trauma — of

indigenous Canadians is part of how people come to use opioids.

Indigenous people make up the majority of opioid-related deaths in both British Columbia and Alberta. Two-spirit-plus people are also more likely to experience trauma due to very high rates of gender-based violence among this group. This crisis has significantly affected indigenous Canadians across Canada and in our territory.

The University of British Columbia researched women who have had a child removed from their home and found a link between subsequent opioid overdoses, especially among indigenous women. The number of opioid-related deaths in Yukon has been increasing over the past few years. We know that we must work upstream to address this crisis. A very good friend of mine just lost his daughter — a young, vibrant, beautiful woman. To me, she is one of our numbers in the Yukon of women who have died. Yes, I draw it to this. This is not a little thing for me. Yes, I'm emotional. I should be emotional. We all should be. That is why this work is so important.

Mr. Speaker, we outlined this work in many of the actions in Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy. There are 31 of them. They are all within these four pathways. I won't go into all the specifics, because clearly we support this motion, but I wanted to outline why we are here. I recognize that we need emergency tools, but some of these things are band-aids.

I spoke to two of our elders at the Yukon Forum who told me about this specific issue, in terms of how we need to go deep; we need to go to the systemic reasons for so many deaths in our communities. They said that we have to go into all of these areas that we work so hard for — these two indigenous women elders who have worked their life for this. So much great work is underway, Mr. Speaker, on this front, in collaboration with Yukon First Nation governments and other partners on implementation plans.

Again, I am not going to go into much more detail on this other than saying that we have a technical working group working really hard right now to finalize the implementation plan on this strategy and to bring action to the work that we have all worked so hard on. All members of this House signed that declaration to implement this strategy. I am working toward having that implementation plan done in early December, and we are working toward an accountability form, which is also found within the strategy. It is in the fourth pathway around accountability. It is currently planned for February 14 and 15, 2022 to bring all of our partners together and be accountable to one another. Again, we must move toward systemic change in our territory. That is what this strategy is about, and it speaks very clearly to implementing *Putting People First*.

I thank my colleagues for listening to me today, for allowing me to go down a path that is directly related. We have already seen the benefits, of course, of educating the public on addictions and recognizing the signs and symptoms of overdose and training people in using Naloxone. Naloxone nasal spray would provide Yukoners with a simpler, cleaner, less

intimidating, and more universal method of delivering Naloxone doses, and it will save lives.

We firmly support making Naloxone nasal spray publicly available and at no charge. We are committed to doing all that we can to protect and continue to educate Yukoners.

Again, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Leader of the Third Party for bringing forward such an important motion today for us to, I hope, be in support of in consensus today.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, she will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Ms. Tredger: I do want to start by thanking everyone here who has spoken about the things that affect us, because we are not separate from the world here. We are all affected. I just really want to acknowledge that, for all of us, we are all talking about something that is really hard and affects lots of us in personal ways. I want to thank everyone for that.

It's somewhat hard to know what to say about this motion, because we could talk for hours about it. There are stories to tell. There are stories of the people we are losing, who are dying. We have lost over 20 people this year. They are community members, they are our friends, they are family members, they are parents, they are children, and they are dying. They are dying in our hotels, in our streets, in our homes, and in our hospitals.

There are so many stories we could tell, but it is also simple. It is easy to feel helpless in the face of tragedy like this, but we're not helpless. This is something that we can do. Funding intranasal Naloxone is something that we can do to save lives. How could we possibly choose anything else? How could our answer to this be anything other than, "Of course, of course, we will make this life-saving medication available to people."

I do want to briefly address some of the remarks that have been said today in this House. One of the members opposite talked about how he wished he had more time to do the research on this medication and how he wanted time to talk to health care professionals about it. Mr. Speaker, intranasal Naloxone has been available for sale since 2017. It's over four years, and in that time, people have been dying. We have had four years to do research. We have had four years to talk to health care professionals, while people have died. If that had happened, we wouldn't be bringing forward this motion today.

We are in a crisis. This is a simple, simple decision that we can make that can save lives. How can our answer be anything — anything — other than, "Of course, yes, we will."

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This afternoon, we are talking about society increasing its capacity to save lives through the use of a relatively simple device that will administer a drug to people, that will save them. The lives that we are trying to save are people who are often in the grips of a terrible chronic illness: addiction to illicit drugs. This is such an important issue to all Yukoners, and I'm very glad it's on the floor this afternoon.

We've heard the emotion in the room; we've heard some of the personal trials and tribulations; you and I have had discussions about this in recent history, so I am very glad it's before us today. I think, while we are talking about Naloxone, there is much more at stake here. It ties into so many things in society that my colleagues and other members of this House have touched on this afternoon.

Society has demonized these substances, these drugs — criminalized their use. We now have multi-million dollar, even billion-dollar, organizations that are supplying drugs to our communities across the country and here in the Yukon. Civil society is struggling to prosecute those responsible. It costs a lot in policing and bylaw time. We're all doing this thing. It's a tax on our resources, on our courts. It's insidious.

The bottom line is that we're spending millions on health care and policing on this issue, and to me, neither approach is working very well. We need new approaches. Several years ago, we legalized cannabis, and society is assessing how that is going. There was a lot of speculation about the end of days happening with that enormous societal shift, and I daresay the worst effects have yet to materialize. The power of the illicit producers hasn't vanished yet, but there is evidence that we are displacing the illegal market.

We know that valuable court time has been saved. We know that people have avoided criminal records for simple possession of cannabis, and we know that consumers of cannabis now have a safe supply. The illicit market, of course, remains, and to curb it, we have to spend millions — as I have said earlier — on policing and with middling success. We are losing far too many souls to these illegal drugs — far, far too many. I don't have to tell you that; I don't have to tell my colleagues that; I don't have to say that in this House — we know that — we are reading about it — far, far too often.

We are in the midst of an opioid crisis in North America, and the Leader of the Third Party has asked that we support deployment of Naloxone nasal spray free of charge here in the Yukon. I know that there isn't a person in this House who would disagree with that. This is important to Yukoners — the member opposite has noted — and we have seen how many deaths have happened, even since January 1. They are dying, though, because our drug supplies are being laced with opioids to cut the price, boost the high and presumably the addictive qualities.

It is devastating the community of Yukoners who have fallen prey to this chronic illness. As I have said, it is killing people — far too many people. We have all spoken about it this afternoon.

Virtually every nation, province and territory, region, city, and town is struggling with this crisis. So, until society builds consensus for a more substantive change in how we deal with drugs, our government is taking steps to deal with this issue — real steps, right now.

We know that every life lost to an overdose is preventable, and like the rest of Canada, the Yukon has experienced this opioid crisis and sees how insidious it is. These addictions start as pleasurable and morph into a need — something you can't live without. They activate powerful reward centres in people's

brains. Those people feel good, but when that feeling wears off, they crave that feeling again — a hunger, a compulsion. Then, for far too many, they are hooked, and far too many people are dying.

So, supervised consumption sites provide a safe and supportive place for people who use drugs to consume illicit substances with trained professionals. Again, the goal is to save lives. With Blood Ties Four Directions, we have opened a safe consumption site in Whitehorse. The location also provides a number of harm reduction services, including Naloxone kits, that support people who use drugs. It offers access to medical attention and offers supports for people who are seeking help with an addiction.

Another element of our harm reduction approach is a safe supply. Again, we have that just recently. My colleague, the Minister of Health and Social Services, has negotiated an agreement with Ottawa to have a safe supply option for people here in Whitehorse. This allows drug users to access prescription drugs as an alternative to potentially toxic and dangerous street drugs. Again, try to cut the poisons — the poison supply — from the market. This was a commitment in our Liberal platform. It was also a point of agreement with the New Democratic Party across the aisle there, and so it was an easy addition to our confidence and supply agreement.

The program is managed through a person's doctor or through a trained medical professional. That person is closely monitored. This type of initiative is being run in Toronto, London, Ottawa, Vancouver, and now Whitehorse. Again, we're right alongside some of the most progressive cities in the country, and I think we should all be proud of that. Again, this is a program that is being delivered to try to slap a band-aid on a really, really important and crippling societal issue.

Professionals in the field believe the safe supply will have a positive impact in the Yukon, that it will save lives, and I sincerely hope it does. I don't think anybody in this Chamber would disagree. That's another way that we're trying to help, Mr. Speaker. It's another action this government has taken.

Another one is before the House right now: safer communities and neighbourhoods legislation. These changes, if approved, will make it harder for drug dealers and criminals in general to operate in our communities. They currently operate almost with impunity. It's costing a lot of police resources to root them out. So, we're looking for new avenues — new ways.

We know that enforcement alone will fail, but together with other efforts, such as the safe consumption site and safe supply, we will help save lives and keep our community safe for children.

Now, the Yukon Party, we know, opposes these amendments. They are concerned about gun rights. Yes, you heard that right. They are choosing to put gun rights above the safety of children. I question that priority, but there it is. The New Democratic Party has also indicated that they will not support the safer communities and neighbourhoods amendments. This is also a little surprising and disappointing. There is an increasing rate of crime in our communities, particularly in Whitehorse and the downtown core, and here is

a chance to take some action to protect residents living there. We have SCAN protocols in place with nine First Nations across the territory. The First Nations support and want these amendments. They know the issues that they face and how devastating they are. We have been talking about them all afternoon, and they want more tools to protect themselves and their citizens. I hope that our colleagues can find a way to support these amendments to protect our citizens and tamp down access to drugs in our community.

As for nasal Naloxone, we are in agreement. The opioid crisis is rampant and we must take action to curb it. It is killing Yukoners. We have said that a lot this afternoon. Like my colleagues, I have taken the Blood Ties Four Directions training, practising injections into a sponge ball. We did this over in LePage Park. This was several months ago. It seems like yesterday. I keep the kit handy. It is in my truck and I take it into the house because I don't want the contents to freeze.

Firing a needle into someone is not a simple process. Firing a needle into a sponge ball, as my colleague has indicated, isn't a simple process either. It takes some training and a little courage. I look forward to a simpler way. I think that it is all for the best. This is one that I can support. I know that it is one that everyone in this House will support. I thank the Leader of the Third Party for bringing it before us today. I think that this is really useful for society, but as I have noted, it does not address the root causes. It addresses a problem that already exists — a problem that is devastating. I know that it will save lives but, as a society, we really need to start to look at far deeper solutions and take some of the hard decisions that will save more lives and change the structure of society so that we don't have as many people addicted to the drugs in the first place.

Ms. Blake: I would like to thank my colleague for bringing this motion forward, and I think it is an important issue that we do need to talk about — having more harm reduction options in place for those who are active opioid users. I have been listening to the conversations unfold in the House, and I appreciate all the feedback that has been given.

I have been reflecting on our situation here in Yukon with the overdose deaths that we have been seeing in the territory and the increases that we have been seeing this year and in previous years. I have been reflecting on my own experiences from when I first learned about what "overdose" meant. I was 16 years old when I first learned of a drug overdose. At that time, it was rare to hear about it.

During my time of being a homeless youth in Whitehorse, I have seen overdoses — not as much as happens now. As I have gotten older, I've been seeing and hearing about more and more of it happening in the territory. It is something that impacts all communities. It impacts all people in the territory. Through conversations that I have been privileged to have with people, I have always been reminded that people don't choose to become addicts; they don't choose to overdose.

With having measures in place such as the Naloxone kit, or the nasal spray, that is a support mechanism that I believe will continue to help people. It's an option that is in place to help save lives.

I am not comfortable using the injection option. I have heard from people who have had the nasal spray and heard about the effects of it and their comfort with it. I believe having the Naloxone spray in place is an option that more and more people might be open to in the communities.

I do understand that maybe more research needs to happen and more conversations need to happen with medical professionals. I think about my work as a front-line worker and what I have seen and the people whom I have been privileged to work with, the stories I've heard — and I go back to support. Any support that we can implement in Yukon for Yukoners, whether it is for drug addiction or to save lives or any other things that we look at as government, that is our responsibility.

I stand in support of this motion, and I would like to extend my thanks to service providers in the community who work the front lines and address opioid overdoses in the city or in the communities. My thoughts go out to them because, when you deal with hard situations like that, I think about the impacts on the mental health of our front-line workers and those long-term impacts that they may carry.

I give my thanks to the Yukon hospital staff, the emergency workers — they work with many of our people in the community who go through the emergency department in an overdose state and they do everything they can to reverse the overdose and save their lives. That's all I wanted to say.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: In response to Motion No. 200 by the member opposite, I rise today to discuss opioid use and nasal Naloxone. We have heard many heartfelt and important parts of this debate today, and I thank everyone who has spoken to the matter.

The opioid crisis continues to be one of the most serious public health crises in Canada's recent history. Like the rest of Canada, the Yukon is currently experiencing an opioid epidemic. Every single loss of a Yukoner to this epidemic is a tragedy. They are someone's friend, family member, loved one. It touches us all.

Our government is taking concrete steps to address this crisis and provide supports for people who use drugs. An overdose is a result of an individual consuming more substances than their body can cope with and/or those contaminated with substances that the individual did not intend to consume and did not know they were consuming. Not all overdose incidents result in death. The member opposite, in introducing this motion, made reference to a letter that was sent to me two days ago. I very much appreciate the signatories to that letter and the information that it provided. I will, of course, respond to that letter, but it has not happened yet.

In the first paragraph of that letter — and I quote: "Yukon should use every tool at its disposal in the fight against the opioid overdose crisis." Madam Deputy Speaker, I could not agree more.

We clearly have had the opportunity in the consideration of this motion — but, truly, at the Department of Health and Social Services, in the consideration of all harm reduction opportunities — except that the stigma toward injection drug use is real — it is real in our communities, it is real in

Whitehorse, and it is real throughout the territory — except that the nasal Naloxone is easier to administer and is preferred by many, as you have spoken to yourself, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We continue to take a harm reduction approach across our services, supports, and work with our partners. Harm reduction recognizes that abstinence is not always realistic for those who use substances. Harm reduction programs are often the first point of access to safe treatment and prevention resources for persons who do use substances. That is so critically important. Harm reduction approaches are so important as part of a substance user's recovery process and their access to other primary care services.

Harm reduction approaches are critical, but I thank both of my colleagues for turning our attention to the root causes of why some people use drugs and suffer addictions. It must be something considered by all members of this House as we work to save lives here in the territory.

As part of our harm reduction approach, we have made the Naloxone injectable and Naloxone kits and training available free of charge throughout a number of community outlets for Yukoners since February 2017. Prior to determining which Naloxone kit option to have available in the territory, the Department of Health and Social Services carefully considered the different forms of Naloxone available at that time and how it's administered and made the decision to predominantly provide injection kits. They were available at the time, they were well tested, and they were a good, safe option.

Nasal Naloxone is available through non-insured health benefits and the Referred Care Clinic provides both nasal Naloxone and injectable Naloxone for use by their outreach nurse. When responding to an overdose, multiple doses are often required, as we have heard from the member opposite today.

The injectable kit contains three doses of Naloxone while nasal Naloxone kits contain two doses. Feedback from community members indicate that some prefer nasal Naloxone while others prefer to administer injectable Naloxone. The option is important. Each Naloxone nasal spray kit costs approximately \$113 per dose, with injectable Naloxone kits being approximately \$80 for the three doses. By accessing the intramuscular injection kits, we are able to provide a greater number of these lifesaving kits throughout the territory. To date, in 2021, we have provided approximately 2,300 kits, which is 6,900 doses. We worked in collaboration with the BC Centre for Disease Control's Take Home Naloxone program to adapt training and materials to begin providing these supports in the territory. Pharmacies provide injectable Naloxone kits free of charge — again, as noted by the member opposite — to any individual who requests it. The Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services branch orders and distributes these kits, including for non-governmental organizations. Free injectable Naloxone kits are accessible through various supports. I appreciate that we are talking about another option here today, but I think that it is incredibly important for Yukoners to know that they can, like some of our colleagues here in the Legislative Assembly, obtain a free injectable Naloxone kit and training, and they can then get a free kit with supports and services from

the Kwanlin Dün First Nation health centre, from Blood Ties Four Directions, the Referred Care Clinic, Yukon hospitals, all Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services hubs, and community health centres, among other places. As we have noted, that list includes pharmacies. Nasal Naloxone kits are available at most pharmacies for purchase. Individuals who receive medication coverage through non-insured health benefits are eligible to have the cost of nasal Naloxone covered. When requested, income-support clients may be able to receive coverage for nasal Naloxone.

Naloxone kits are just one of many ways that we are working to support people who use drugs and to combat the opioid crisis. An opioid outreach prevention coordinator delivers harm reduction workshops and materials in Whitehorse and rural communities. The coordinator also distributes take-home Naloxone kits and harm reduction supplies.

Blood Ties Four Directions provides drug-checking services and Naloxone kits and training at their harm reduction services location and at the supervised consumption site and through the outreach van.

As noted, we recently opened the supervised consumption site in Whitehorse as mutually agreed upon in the confidence and supply agreement. Along with supervised consumption, this site includes connecting people with other health and social services like substance use treatment, housing, and employment assistance. It is such a critical part of the work they do.

Also, in relation to the confidence and supply agreement, along with our government's commitment to support Yukoners, we are expanding access to a medically prescribed, safe supply of opioids.

Opioid treatment services available at the Referred Care Clinic without a referral include a suite of treatment interventions for individuals living with substance use services. This service is low barrier and accepts walk-ins in order to meet clients where they are.

As we move forward in addressing the opioid crisis, we will continue discussions with people with lived experience, pharmacists, physicians, service providers, and other key stakeholders. We will continue to assess the most effective way to provide life-saving Naloxone to the community. We must engage with folks who are living this experience so that our solutions can meet their needs. The implementation of harm reduction approaches is proven to save lives and we remain committed to enhancing these services with our partners.

Madam Deputy Speaker, all complex issues require many solutions. I am proud of our increased programs to address harm reduction here in the territory.

I can confirm for the members of this Legislative Assembly and for all Yukoners that Blood Ties Four Directions currently has a limited supply of nasal Naloxone, which was provided previously to Blood Ties Four Directions with the assistance of our government and the federal government and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation. They have nasal Naloxone kits for staff to use and a small reserve for people with disabilities. The Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services branch of the

Department of Health and Social Services will be placing an order for more than 100 nasal Naloxone kits that will be dispersed to Blood Ties Four Directions, the supervised consumption site, the Referred Care Clinic, and to offices where mental wellness and substance use services are provided. That is just the initial step.

Our work will continue to meet the terms of the motion, which are to provide nasal Naloxone kits free of charge at the locations specified and others that will work to meet the needs of Yukoners and save lives. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this motion.

Deputy Speaker (Ms. Blake): If the member now speaks, she will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Ms. White: Before I go on, I just want to apologize to this House for my impatience. I think, to be super frank, that my impatience is because of the losses that we have talked about. I want to honour the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate for grounding her comments, and I apologize for stopping that. I too honour the loss of your friend's daughter. I do, absolutely.

My impatience today has to do with those losses in the community, the funerals that I have attended, the people whom I have spoken to — the parents, the siblings, all those people who have reached out. So, it's with that impatience that I apologize for my behaviour because that was not my intention. We all recognize how important this conversation is. I had no intention of losing focus on that, so I want to apologize.

I want to thank people for their comments, and I especially want to thank the Minister of Health and Social Services for her commitment that she just made and for the steps that are being taken. I appreciate very much that the first step has been taken to getting these nasal sprays available in the community and the commitment that it will go farther.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about harm reduction, it's really important that we just don't focus on the City of Whitehorse. It's critical that it goes outside the City of Whitehorse. Not that long ago, I was at a funeral in Mayo where we saw each other for this reason. So, harm reduction just doesn't belong in the City of Whitehorse. Safe supply needs to make it to the communities — absolutely — and these nasal sprays will need to make it to the communities.

I thank my colleagues for sharing important parts and stories, because I really believe, in order for the community to fully understand how big this crisis is, that it will only be with the sharing of stories that we acknowledge and recognize the loss of the people who are no longer with us. It should be preventable.

So, that's what this is about. This is about saving lives; this is about preventing death; this is about making sure that community, like I said, through an act of love, can support community. I thank my colleagues for their words, because today this is an important step. This is another step down our path of harm reduction.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?
Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 15 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion No. 200 agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. Blake): Order, please.

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Chair: Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 202: *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Tourism and Culture — continued

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Madam Chair, we will be fairly brief here today. I think that we have had an opportunity to get through most of the questions, and opposition parties have identified that they are, I think, pretty comfortable with what we have been able to share so far.

I am going to just read into the record a couple of questions — and there are a couple of answers for questions from our previous time in Committee of the Whole — just so that we can have them on the record — asked by both opposition parties.

So, first, it was a question from the Member for Porter Creek North asking how many businesses that cater to the specific German-speaking market have been forced to either close due to COVID — or does the department keep these sorts of stats? The answer to that — further to the response that we had that day, in which we really focused on our economic benefit of the Condor flights and, again, the number of travellers coming to the Yukon on this airline over the last 20-year history — is that we, Tourism and Culture, don't specifically track which businesses cater to the German-speaking market. But an important note is that Germany is Yukon's largest overseas international market, and German-speaking travellers are our highest yielding travellers. As such, the suspension of the Condor flights since 2020 has absolutely and undoubtedly had a detrimental effect on Yukon's businesses.

That said, there have been very few tourism business closures during the pandemic, thanks in large part to folks in our departments doing a really good job with our business relief programs, including Tourism and Culture's three-year, \$15-million tourism and relief plan. I think that we just had our final statistics, as well, on our business relief program, and I think that we have just come in allocating over \$11 million, I believe, to a number of companies, as well as another range of programs that we had.

The next one, Madam Chair, was a question posed by you. It asked whether public rest stops and other facilities along Yukon's highways will be maintained during the winter months. The answer to that is that there is a total of 61 highway rest stops throughout the territory that include one or more outhouses. Six of these rest stops are closed in the winter when a highway, such as the Top of the World Highway, is closed. Another 45 rest stops are maintained year-round, largely by the Department of Highways and Public Works. Tourism and Culture maintains a few sites during the summer months. Frequency of cleaning rest stops that are optional in winter is reduced to match the need, but we can have discussions in the future if there are areas that you would like me to highlight.

Our third answer has to do with another question from the Member for Porter Creek North. It was asking for an update on

the visitor information centre in Watson Lake, including: Are there plans to keep leasing the same space in the recreation centre and what is the annual cost of the space? To answer that, the Department of Highways and Public Works has extended the lease with the Town of Watson Lake for the visitor information centre in the recreation centre until October 31, 2024. The annual cost of this space is \$51,175. Again, the Yukon government is in preliminary discussions with the Liard First Nation to potentially lease space for the visitor information centre in their proposed cultural and community services building.

I just wanted to make sure that those were on the record. Again, if I don't have the chance, I want to thank the officials who are with us here today — Deputy Minister Ferbey and acting finance director Kate Olynyk. These folks came in today to make sure, if there were any questions with a focus on the announcements this week — we certainly know that it was brought up in the House that there are a number of events that have been cancelled. We are monitoring that and we are pulling data together just to see what that impact is. Again, we have had a number of businesses reach out to us really just to share with us what they feel are some of the key items that they want us to focus on. I know that the department has already started building some program submissions for us, if need be, for me to take forward if our current programs — the accommodation and non-accommodation programs — can't be used with an increased scope.

That is some important information for the floor. We have had some discussions today with at least one of the chambers. I know that there will be an information session taking place on Friday morning. I believe that it is the Department of Highways and Public Works, Health and Social Services, Justice, and Economic Development. It will be an online format. It is providing information to the private sector on protocols that may need to be in place as well as some information around the app that we would be providing to the business sector through the app store.

As well, I have talked to my colleagues. The one thing that I have shared is that we know that, for the safety of Yukoners, we have to have protocols in place, but I have asked that we just be very respectful of the short time period that the private sector has and be cognizant of the fact that it takes time to deal with staffing issues. It takes time away from your regular business and responsibility to put these protocols in place.

Again, thanks to the team that showed up. For the record, this is a good opportunity to thank our permanent director of Finance — which I have just been made aware of — congratulations.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture?

Seeing none, we will proceed to line-by-line debate.

Ms. Tredger: Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, cleared or carried as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, cleared or carried

Chair: The Member for Whitehorse Centre has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, cleared or carried as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$3,985,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$3,985,000 agreed to

Department of Tourism and Culture agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for five minutes.

Recess

Chair: Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Yukon Development Corporation — continued

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am just going to give some very brief answers to a couple of questions. I know that the corporation has been preparing some legislative returns as well for other questions. Those will come. I will just acknowledge Deputy Minister Ferbey and Ms. Krista Roske who are here from the Development Corporation.

I am not anticipating much debate today, but the two things that I wanted to talk about were — both parties, the last time we spoke about the Development Corporation, talked about the grid-scale battery and the site for the grid-scale battery and talked about the clearing that was happening there. I asked the corporation to give me some information. The land belongs to Kwanlin Dün, and it's clearing that they are doing. We reached out to Kwanlin Dün to ask what was happening with the trees that they were clearing. They informed us that they are saving the larger wood for firewood for citizens and elders. The brush, I think, they will burn or chip. I thank the members for their

questions about that, and I thank Kwanlin Dün for following up with us.

The other thing that I want to talk about for a second is the question about diesel generators and replacement. The Yukon Party put out a press release about this a couple of days ago. I think it is important that we clarify.

As I said when I stood last time, there are two purposes right now for thermal generation in the territory. One is to back up our renewable system. We need that backup because our grid is not connected more broadly to the Outside. It's called an "islanded grid". We have to have that backup in place. That includes the LNG plant and diesel generators, but those are the permanent diesel generators. Those do need to be replaced from time to time. I think that I stated last time, and I will state again that the project is anticipated to be in the range of \$45 million, although that estimate is subject to change based on the results of Yukon Energy's competitive procurement process for materials and services. That number is not a firm number. That's just a working estimate at this time.

There was something that Yukon Energy asked me to just correct. It is on page 538 of Hansard. I don't believe that the challenge is with what was stated here or in Hansard; it's just that they wish to correct the record. This is about rental generators that will no longer be needed after the backup thermal replacement project is complete. The forecast is that this should be completed early in 2024 and that, at that time, it will effectively reduce two rental diesels.

Broadly speaking, the rental diesels are for if we have a shortfall — a gap — between what our hydro facilities can produce and the demand that is out there. As stated before, we believe that those rented diesels are a better option than trying to build an additional diesel plant — a permanent plant — because, once you build that plant, you have to continue to pay it off over time, whereas the diesel generators are a more nimble option and the two costs are virtually the same on levelized costs.

Thank you, Madam Chair. If there are any questions, I'm happy to get up, and if not, I look forward to line-by-line debate.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation?

Seeing none, we will proceed to line by line.

Ms. Tredger: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, cleared or carried as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, cleared or carried

Chair: The Member for Whitehorse Centre has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, cleared or carried as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$7,377,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$7,377,000 agreed to

Yukon Development Corporation agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for five minutes.

Recess

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources — continued

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am not going to give any more response at this point, but I will welcome back Ms. Shirley Abercrombie, the assistant deputy minister from Energy, Mines and Resources. If we clear today, then this will be the last time that she is here in the Legislature, and I am sure we will all want to give her our love. I will welcome her back. Thank you, Deputy Chair.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources?

Seeing none, we will proceed to line-by-line debate.

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 53, Energy, Mines and Resources, cleared or carried as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, cleared or carried

Deputy Chair: The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, cleared or carried as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$2,836,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$235,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$3,071,000 agreed to

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources agreed to

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Deputy Chair. I believe that I am in the batting order, so I think that Highways and Public Works is next; however, matters have proceeded a little more quickly than anticipated. I would ask for a 15-minute break to ensure that I can get my officials here.

Deputy Chair: Do members wish to take a 15-minute recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Chair (Ms. Blake): Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Highways and Public Works — continued

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the opportunity to continue to speak on the supplementary budget request for the Department of Highways and Public Works for fiscal year 2021-22.

Once again, I would like to welcome my officials: to my right, Deputy Minister Paul McConnell, and to my left, assistant deputy minister Sherri Young.

So, I will proceed where I left off yesterday. The Member for Whitehorse Centre had a number of questions about climate risk assessment and using a climate lens with respect to, really, now all Yukon infrastructure projects going forward. In fact, I believe that there was a notice of motion tabled in the House this afternoon as well.

Understanding the impacts of climate change on the Yukon is crucial to being able to have a resilient society in the years ahead. To this end, I'm happy to report that the Government of Yukon is nearing the completion of a Yukon-wide climate change risk assessment. This risk assessment will help us to determine how vulnerable Yukoners are to deal with climate risks and the different ways that climate change will impact people and communities. It will assess how our built, natural, and social systems need to adjust to climate change and potential damages. It will also help us to determine how we can take advantage of opportunities and cope with the consequences.

We are making sure that Yukoners' perspectives inform the assessment, incorporating scientific, local, and indigenous knowledge. Specifically, we are working with experts in First Nation governments, municipalities, and stakeholders in the health, social, and economic sectors. We expect to release the final Yukon-wide climate change risk assessment report in the winter of 2022. The results of this Yukon-wide assessment will inform decisions related to adaptation and offer ideas for action to enhance climate resilience in the Yukon. These results can also help First Nations and communities plan their actions to support local climate change adaptation and address local climate risks.

Understanding climate impacts and the potential risks that they present is a first step in adapting and becoming resilient to climate change over the long term. To this end, one of the actions outlined in *Our Clean Future* is to conduct climate risk assessments of all major transportation infrastructure projects and major building projects above \$10 million. We are doing this, but before I get into the details, I want to talk about the two components of how we are tackling climate change: adaptation and mitigation.

Under the adaptation category, as our climate changes, there are going to be a number of impacts: temperature increases, precipitation pattern changes, more extreme weather, and species migration. The list goes on. These environmental changes will then cause a number of impacts that, in many cases, will be unprecedented. We only have to look at the snowfall last year and the flooding that occurred to point to examples of extreme weather affecting the Yukon. Climate change impacts can cover a range of scenarios from flooding to fire to increased temperature fluctuations and precipitation events. We will need to adapt to these changes as they happen and be prepared for them as much as possible. The Yukon's climate risk assessment that I mentioned will assist with this.

As the Minister of Highways and Public Works, I want to ensure that the infrastructure we are building today is planning for the climate impacts of tomorrow. One way to do this is to do a climate risk assessment on a particular project. One of the purposes of a climate risk assessment is to determine the infrastructure's vulnerability to climate change and use that information to incorporate climate change adaptation measures into the design to mitigate climate change impacts. For example, a climate change risk assessment may focus on determining site and project variables for permafrost, fire, flood, and other risks. We then undertake a qualitative and quantitative assessment of the risks and vulnerabilities. This framework addresses the probability of an identified, negative event occurring and the severity of the consequences of that event on the infrastructure event.

The general approach to evaluating and incorporating climate risk in infrastructure projects is to: (1) determine the project's scope and climate impact assessment study parameters; (2) determine the variables to consider, including infrastructure elements such as signage, bridges, culverts, building foundations, and road surface materials; (3) identify climate parameters that could cause degradation or failure of the infrastructure or affect its use; (4) determine specific

management strategies that could be employed to reduce this risk; and (5) determine the probability of a negative event occurring and what the severity of consequences could be.

We analyze questions like: (1) What can happen? (2) How likely is it to occur? (3) What are the consequences to the infrastructure element? — and so on.

The climate risk assessment recommendations from the analysis are then incorporated so that the final design takes into account possible climate change impacts. The result is infrastructure that is resilient to climate change. In all cases, the point of the climate risk assessment is to be more resilient and adaptable to the possible climate change impacts of the future.

Madam Chair, indeed, we are constantly adapting our infrastructure development processes so that our assets are resilient to climate change. This is important to the Department of Highways and Public Works, and the action item in *Our Clean Future* reflects our commitment to mitigating climate risk and adapting to possible climate change impacts.

On a related note, as outlined in *Our Clean Future*, our government will also complete a road vulnerability study to inform the development of standards and specifications by 2023. The vulnerability study is a key action to inform a system-wide approach, building infrastructure resilience. This action is on track for completion as well by 2023.

I would also like to point out that the Yukon participates in the northern transportation adaptation initiative program. These research projects have helped Highways and Public Works engineers to better understand and incorporate climate change mitigations in the planning, scope, schedule, and budget of the proposed projects. This program supports projects that: (1) develop new knowledge about how climate change is affecting transportation systems in the north; (2) develops tools and practices to respond to these effects; and (3) provides education and training for northerners to help manage transportation systems affected by climate change.

The Yukon is not alone in dealing and adapting to climate change and programs like these help to share knowledge and viable climate responses. Good planning requires that we be aware of what the changing climate could look like and the impacts that it could have on our infrastructure. We are building to ensure that we can adapt to these changes, but it is also important that we do our part to reduce emissions wherever possible to mitigate the impact of climate change itself.

This brings me to the second main component in addressing climate change — mitigation. As we all know, greenhouse gas emissions are responsible for our changing climate. As a global society, we need to reduce our emissions as quickly as possible. To this end, we want to ensure that, in the Yukon, we look at how a project could help to achieve our goal of emission reductions. As I mentioned before, the department has put together an *Our Clean Future* acceleration team to focus on developing and incorporating an energy and sustainability lens into the decision-making processes for major government projects, policies, and programs.

This lens will incorporate both adaptation and mitigation perspectives. Having this lens will ensure that greenhouse gas emissions and climate change resilience are considered

consistently when capital decisions are made across government. In fact, as I previously stated, there are actually training sessions now happening to teach our employees how to employ a climate lens for specific projects such as the work occurring on the north Klondike Highway, which I mentioned yesterday, pursuant to the national trade corridors fund and why this lens is vital to our climate strategy.

Applying a climate lens and focusing on emission reductions is happening across the department in a multitude of ways — from electrifying our fleet, to how we do procurement, to large numbers of building retrofits being done. Reducing emissions is a primary focus. Indeed, we are doing many things to reduce our emissions and to be a part of the effort on mitigation.

Let me speak now toward some of the specifics of climate risk assessments and the use of a climate lens. As I mentioned the other day, some of our projects need to follow the federal guidelines on using a climate lens. Part of this is a climate risk assessment. According to the Government of Canada's model, the climate lens is a horizontal requirement, applicable to: Infrastructure Canada's Investing in Canada infrastructure program, also known as ISIP; the Disaster, Mitigation, and Adaptation fund, DMAF; and their Smart Cities Challenge.

It has two components: the greenhouse gas mitigation assessment, which measures the anticipated GHG emissions impact of an infrastructure project, and the climate change resilience assessment, which employs a risk management approach to anticipate, prevent, withstand, respond to, recover, and adapt from climate change related disruptions or impacts. Individual proponents need to undertake one or both types of assessments, depending on the program funding stream and the estimated total eligible cost of the project.

In the Yukon, many of our projects have been able to receive federal funding because they have followed these requirements. For example, one project that I want to point to is the second phase of the north Klondike Highway upgrade. For this project: (1) a climate risk assessment for this project is planned for completion in 2022; (2) the assessment will consider potential long-term climate change related impacts to the entire project components, including impacts on greenhouse gas emissions from transportation; (3) the assessment will be initiated and underway prior to the completion of any final designs so that the assessment findings can inform project design implementation and future operation and maintenance plans as appropriate; (4) Highways and Public Works staff will be conducting the climate risk assessment and have budgeted funds to hire professional assistance from consultants as required; (5) prior to starting the assessment, project staff will participate in a training course for climate risk assessments organized in partnership with Yukon's Climate Change Secretariat and the Canadian Standards Association; (6) even though an assessment has not been completed yet, Highways and Public Works has participated in dozens of research projects related to permafrost degradation as a result of climate change and several related to assessing hydrological response to climate change; and (7) some of these projects involve researchers from Yukon University.

We also completed a climate risk assessment this past summer for the new school at Burwash Landing and have completed a climate risk assessment for the Dempster fibre project. Furthermore, the Government of Yukon is participating in the northern transportation adaptation initiative, the NTAI, a federally funded project that brings together government agencies and research institutions to address climate change impacts on northern highway infrastructure built in permafrost environments. These research projects have helped Highways and Public Works engineers to better understand and incorporate climate change mitigations into the planning, scope, schedule, and budget of the proposed project.

Climate change mitigations that are already planned to be part of the design include: augmented drainage infrastructure to accommodate flooding; additional embankment structure to raise the grade above predicted future flood elevations; and wider roadside ditches and engineered backslopes to protect against flooding and slope erosion as a result of increased precipitation and extreme weather events due to climate change.

While the federal model is a good starting point, I am excited that we are doing the groundwork and research in collaboration with Yukon University to build a climate lens framework tailored for Yukon's unique geographic conditions. An example of the made-in-Yukon lens is the five-pillar framework that is used to evaluate retrofits and renewable energy projects. This framework for infrastructure decisions takes into account local economic benefits and technology that is suited to our winter conditions. This is an example of how we are using the federal climate lens model and tailoring it to our territory.

As I mentioned recently when talking about the Carmacks bypass, our major transportation projects are being designed to take climate impacts into consideration. The objective of using a climate lens for this purpose is to meaningfully inform infrastructure planning and decision-making. Bridges may be built higher to accommodate increased water flow, and culverts may be bigger for the same reason. Erosive forces, extreme weather events, temperature fluctuations, and permafrost thawing are all aspects that are considered in the design of new transportation infrastructure.

The same is done for our buildings. This is particularly true when accounting for potential permafrost changes. For example, the design for the foundation of the Old Crow health and wellness centre specifically has adapted measures to account for permafrost thaw. Another related example is the thermosiphons that have been installed at Dry Creek on the Alaska Highway. These are designed to maintain the structural integrity of the highway by mitigating the effects of permafrost thaw.

Another example is that, to be more resilient to the risks of permafrost thaw, we are developing and implementing a plan by 2024 to conduct routine monitoring of the structural condition of Government of Yukon buildings located on permafrost. Across the territory, we are —

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): Order. Member for Copperbelt North, please.

Mr. Dixon: I am happy to turn back to the issues that I was asking the minister about yesterday, in particular in relation to the First Nation procurement policy. I have a few very specific questions, so I will ask the minister if he can respond to these questions and exercise some brevity, as I am sure he has a number of notes about the First Nation procurement policy generally. I am not interested in getting into those lengthy explanations. What I am looking for are a few specific questions.

With that, Deputy Chair, how many procurements since the First Nation procurement policy has come into effect have been conducted with the policy in place? If the number is too big for the minister to draw on right away, I would accept the answer of "All of them" — if that is the case, it would be good to know — "Some of them", or "Only a few". What I am looking for is: How widely used has the First Nation procurement policy been since it came into force?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I will provide the member opposite with a brief answer, and then we will probably have to elaborate. The short answer to your question is that the First Nation procurement policy applies to all procurements now. The member opposite will also know — and I can go into further detail in future answers — that there were certain components that came into effect on February 22. Additional measures were implemented on April 26 and then were deemed to be fully implemented by October 4.

I would have detailed notes about what the parameters were on February 22, the parameters on April 26, and then the full implementation of the policy on October 4, which had the bid value reduction, the First Nation business labour participation, and the First Nation business registry, which is an ongoing process right now.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's answer there. I would like to ask about some of those features that the minister raised — in particular, the bid value reductions and the labour components. I will start with the labour component. The First Nation procurement policy participation measures include the ability for a bidder to include a commitment to hire First Nation labour. There are then commensurate reductions as a result of that commitment to hire labour. That is something that can affect the award of a contract and the relative success of a bidder.

My question is: How does the department enforce those commitments that are made? How can the department look at a contract that has been awarded and evaluate whether or not a proponent lived up to their commitment as laid out in their bid?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Just for clarification, specific to this question: Just with respect to the labour participation component?

Mr. Dixon: Yes.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I will provide a more fulsome response in future days as I anticipate that this will be a topic for some further debate in Committee of the Whole with respect to the procurement policy.

But with respect to, generally speaking, the enforcement of contracts, the member opposite will know that Highways and Public Works has contract management processes. Of course,

it is the obligation of the contracting party to comply with the terms and conditions that they have agreed to. If there is an issue with respect to whether the terms and conditions of the contract have been met by the successful party afterwards, there is a dispute resolution mechanism.

Mr. Dixon: So, if a bidder commits to hiring a number of First Nation employees through the course of their Yukon First Nation participation plan — which is an aspect of the policy — and they don't live up to it, it's not known to the government until the project is complete. How do they go back and enforce the contract, after the contract is complete, and determine whether or not the contractor met the obligations that they committed to in their initial bid?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The main — the member opposite will know this — hammer or the main enforcement tool that the Department of Highways and Public Works has over the supervision of the contract is, of course, through the provision of holdbacks at various points in the execution of the contract.

The bigger topic is something that the department has been looking at for years, as I understand it. That is vendor performance review so that all contractors — not just major contractors — can have a report card and so that their performance as it pertains to the discharging or delivering of the service that they contracted for with Yukon government or with Highways and Public Works met certain standards. The member opposite will know that the vendor performance review program came into effect in October.

The new program will evaluate and score vendors on their performance throughout a government contract. Through this new program, we will incentivize good performance for vendors, encourage project managers and vendors to work together, and provide feedback to vendors on how to improve. Once suppliers have had time to build their scores, high performers will receive more points during tender evaluations, which will increase their chances to secure government contracts.

Through this program, we are aiming to incentivize good performance from vendors and encourage vendors and Yukon government project managers to work closely together and communicate throughout the contract and provide feedback to vendors on ways that they can improve their performance. When a vendor receives their scores, they can either accept, reject, or not respond. If a vendor accepts the score, it is applied to the vendor's overall ranking. If there is no response within 15 calendar days, the score automatically applies. If a vendor rejects their score, the project will be mediated with a vendor to come to an agreement. If no agreement can be reached after 15 calendar days, there is an appeal process.

Another connection to this program is through the Yukon First Nation procurement policy. One of the criteria that the vendor can be scored on is the fulfillment of their tendering commitments to Yukon First Nation participation. When the scores are appealed, Highways and Public Works will review and submit a recommendation to the Deputy Minister of Highways and Public Works for a final decision on the appeal. Scores will be stored in the new e-procurement platform, Bids and Tenders, which means that suppliers will have one location

for bidding and for being able to review their vendor performance scores.

The Yukon government will phase program implementation to ensure that project managers and vendors are familiar with the program before it affects the actual bidding process. In phase 1, which the member opposite will note commenced in October 2021, the Yukon government soft-launched the new program for vendors by capturing scores, but will remove them from the vendor's record after the first year of collection.

Phase 2 will commence one year later, in October 2022, when the Yukon government will capture scores for one year. These scores will lead to the vendor's overall score, but there will be no impacts to the vendors in the procurement process during this phase. I will receive advice from my officials, but I believe those scores are beginning to create the foundation of a performance history on projects; that's correct.

The rubber really hits the road in phase 3, in October 2023, when the Yukon government will take the average of the vendor's score from the last year and will consider that during the procurement process. Vendors will continue to receive scores that will adjust their average score on an ongoing basis.

Based on the tender type, there are up to seven key performance indicators that are assessed for each contract, which creates an average performance score. The key performance indicators are: cost control; health and safety; quality assurance; schedule and time control; staff and administration; Yukon First Nation participation; and functionality and training for goods and contracts.

I have had some fairly lengthy discussions with my officials at Highways and Public Works. I know that this is a long time in the making of a generation that — I'm certainly excited by this project. I think it will, to the member opposite's point, provide some confidence to the taxpayer, I think, but also to all contractors that they are being evaluated on how they are delivering what they said that they would do on these seven matrices.

So, it's starting now and it will be basically fully implemented in October 2023. It overlaps quite nicely with the Yukon First Nation procurement policy because there will be issues about whether a contractor has met their obligation with respect to the labour participation component which they have provided in their bid and the ultimately accepted documents.

There will be objective criteria that have to be met. If they aren't met, then there will be various mechanisms, but most importantly, they will be receiving a substandard report card, which will necessarily impact on their ability to successfully bid for contracts going forward.

In my view, this has been a fairly notable missing component of the overview, maintenance, and evaluation of major — and not so major — contractors in the Yukon over many years. We are certainly excited to see this vendor performance review program implemented and it will hopefully be a success.

Deputy Chair, seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale North that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Deputy Chair, I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

May the House have a report from the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the House do now adjourn.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to

Speaker: This House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. Monday.

The House adjourned at 5:29 p.m.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 31

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, November 15, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier Government House Leader* Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
Hon. Nils Clarke	Riverdale North	Minister of Highways and Public Works; Environment
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Government House Leader* Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Minister of Economic Development; Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Jeanie McLean	Mountainview	Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

Currie Dixon	Leader of the Official Opposition Copperbelt North	Scott Kent	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Yvonne Clarke	Porter Creek Centre	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Emily Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Annie Blake	Vuntut Gwitchin

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

*Government House Leader: Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee to November 4, 2021; Hon. John Streicker from November 5, 2021

Yukon Legislative Assembly**Whitehorse, Yukon****Monday, November 15, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.**

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.
We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. The following motions have not been placed on the Notice Paper as they are out of date: Motion No. 209, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition, and Motion No. 212, standing in the name of the Third Party.

In addition, the following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as they are out of date: Motion No. 162, standing in the name of the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin; Motion No. 195, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge; and Motions No. 192 and 193, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party.

Finally, the amendment moved on October 13, 2021 by the Minister of Community Services to Motion No. 113, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition, has been removed from the Order Paper as the amendment is outdated.

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will proceed at this time with the Order Paper.

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would like to ask all of my colleagues to welcome a few visitors we have here today for the World Diabetes Day tribute. Marney Paradis has joined us, as well as Jill Nash and Rachel Hrebien. Thank you very much for being here.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would also like to invite the Assembly to welcome Ziad Sahid, who is the executive director for Tech Yukon. He is also attending today for our tribute on our Innovation Commission.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES**In recognition of Innovation Commission**

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today on behalf of all parties to pay tribute to the Innovation Commission during Yukon's Innovation Week, which is focusing this year on building sustainable communities.

The COVID-19 global pandemic has taught us many things. We have witnessed first-hand how innovative and adaptable Yukoners are. The pandemic has highlighted the

need to expand and develop local resources, industries, and businesses so that we may be more resistant to potential future disruptions of the global marketplace.

Technology and innovation is the fastest growing sector across the globe, accounting for 4.5 percent of global GDP, and is expected to double within the next 15 to 20 years. Yukon's tech sector has grown by an average of 11.4 percent each year over the past three years and represented approximately 3.7 percent of the Yukon's GDP in 2020.

Following the public engagement on the future of innovation in the territory, the Innovation Commission was established to provide critical, technical, and professional advice to develop a five-year innovation strategy that will attract technology start-ups and grow Yukon's digital ecosystem.

Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge and thank the members of the commission for their time and effort in helping to grow this important sector in the Yukon. The Innovation Commission members were chosen for their experience, diversity, and interest in innovation, technology, and entrepreneurship, both within the Yukon and across the world.

The focus of the commission is to consider actions to be undertaken to: encourage and support entrepreneurship and innovation; identify gaps and challenges faced within the Yukon when establishing new businesses and innovative practices and products; and look at mechanisms to grow, attract, and retain entrepreneurs and innovators and opportunities to foster sharing networks that are inclusive of the Yukon's population and communities. With the commission's help, the completed strategy will outline the Yukon's unique strengths and identify actions, programs, and services that will achieve our vision.

Again, I am looking forward to seeing the final strategy, and I want to thank, once again, all the members and advisors on the Innovation Commission for their work to improve the territory. I would also like to take a moment to encourage Yukoners to take in one of the many online events brought to you through Yukon University, Yukonstruct, Yukon Entrepreneur Podcast, and Creative Lab North. Also, check out yukoninnovationweek.com for a complete list of events.

I just want to thank the members of the panel. I think that it's important. A lot of folks have given their time to this. Individuals on the commission: Melaina Sheldon, the former executive director of Creative Lab North; Cherish Clarke; founder and president of Digital Engine Technology; Curtis Shaw, CEO of Northwestel; John Jensen, CEO of MGrid Energy; Astrid Grawehr, partner at Kryotek Arctic Innovation; Inga Petri, founder of Strategic Moves; Chris Lane, partner at Make IT Solutions; and Thomas Park, who is a partner and lead for the BDC Deep Tech Fund. Also, we had a number of advisors from across the globe: Norm Fraser, former professor at Oxford, now chairman of SoftIron; Vero Henry, a local Yukoner now in Paris working in the IT world with the program and start-up manager for Startup Palace; Bernd Petak, partner at Northmark Ventures; Dave Larkin, partner at Northmark Ventures; Patrick Lor, partner at Panache Ventures; Mike Mooney, who is the executive director at Creative Lab North;

and Dr. Alexandra Greenhill, who is the founder and CEO and chief medical officer for Careteam Technologies.

Again, thank you, Ziad, for coming today and for your help and support as an advisor as well.

Applause

In recognition of World Diabetes Day

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to recognize World Diabetes Day, the world's largest diabetes awareness campaign reaching a global audience of over one billion people in more than 160 countries. It is incredibly important to acknowledge this day.

Diabetes Canada estimates that 29 percent of Canadians are living with some form of diabetes. Every day, more than 480 people in our country are diagnosed with this life-changing disease. World Diabetes Day is observed every year on November 14 to coincide with the birthday of Canadian Nobel laureate Sir Frederick Banting, who co-discovered insulin along with Charles Best in 1922, changing the world forever. It has been 99 years, nine months, and 23 days since Leonard Thompson received the very first successful injection of insulin.

Since that groundbreaking day, Canada has been leading the way in diabetes research, education, and treatment. However, a century after its discovery, insulin and other fundamental components of diabetes care remain sometimes beyond the reach of people who need them. Both type 1 and type 2 diabetes have been drastically impacted by innovations here in Canada.

Last year, the Yukon government was the first jurisdiction in Canada to fully fund continuous glucose monitors for all Yukoners. Providing permanent funding for glucose monitoring devices coincides with the recommendations in *Putting People First*, which calls for more person-centered care.

For some time now, the Yukon has also been a national leader in providing access to advanced glucose monitoring technology and other supports for people with type 1 diabetes. This followed a two-year pilot project where participants reported that the program helped them to better manage their conditions, reduce their financial burdens, and improve their quality of life.

I also want to note that here in Canada, diabetes rates reflect a health inequality for indigenous peoples. The prevalence in the general population is about five percent, while it is about 10 percent for our indigenous citizens. Recognition and procedures to improve care must be taken into account.

I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to Yukon T1D Support Network for its ongoing work to support Yukoners living with type 1 diabetes. I would also like to thank the organization for its current campaign to inform and educate Yukoners on type 1 diabetes symptoms.

As a reminder, many Canadians may be living with pre-diabetes or diabetes without even knowing it. Diabetes symptoms can include extreme thirst, frequent urination, unexplained weight loss, and exhaustion. Diabetes experts and

Yukon T1D encourage everyone who is experiencing these symptoms to reach out to their health provider right away.

This year, the World Diabetes Day campaign focuses on access to diabetes care. Again, I would like to note that the Yukon continues to lead the way in providing glucose monitoring and other diabetes care to its citizens — a government campaign, as well as working with our partners to do so.

I want to thank all health care providers and diabetes champions across our territory for their ongoing work to improve health outcomes for Yukoners who are living with diabetes.

Applause

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize November as Diabetes Awareness Month and, more specifically, Sunday, November 14 as World Diabetes Day.

Mr. Speaker, as the minister mentioned, this year is particularly notable as it has been 100 years since the transformative and life-saving treatment — insulin — was discovered by Sir Frederick Banting and Charles Best.

I would like to take a moment to highlight an incredible organization here in the Yukon and talk a little bit about the work that they do to support and advocate for people living with type 1 diabetes in the territory. The Yukon T1D Support Network works to support individuals and families affected by type 1 diabetes. They work with patients who do not have family doctors or endocrinologists to get them the medical support that they require, and after the unanimous passing of an opposition motion in this House in May, they are working with the territorial government to complete a Yukon diabetes strategy and continue to work toward ensuring that the Yukon is part of the national diabetes strategy.

Canada has one of the highest rates of type 1 diabetes, and this rate continues to climb. The Yukon T1D Support Network has begun advocacy work with the federal government on what is being done to ensure that the needs of persons with T1D in the Yukon are included in the development of a national diabetes framework.

We look forward to seeing a response from the federal government and their support in bringing the Yukon into the development of this framework. We all know that the Yukon is a small jurisdiction, but I can attest that this important organization has been critical in advocating for Yukoners with type 1 diabetes, and their input would be incredibly valuable to ensuring a jurisdictionally balanced and inclusive strategy at the national level.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, the inaugural Boulevard of Hope was set up in January by the society to raise money for their efforts and increase awareness for the disease. We look forward to the second annual fundraising event and would like to thank, in advance, the generous businesses who will be sponsoring trees to be lit up in blue and, of course, the incredible volunteers for their time and talents on this initiative.

As the Yukon T1D Support Network continues to support Yukoners, it's important that Yukoners continue to support

them. Funds from this initiative go toward important educational campaigns and important initiatives such as Camp Becca, an annual youth camp for persons with T1D named and held in honour of Rebecca Pollard.

I would like to give special thanks to the Yukon T1D Support Network for their continued advocacy and support for people and families living with type 1 diabetes. Their dedication is inspirational, and the work that they have done for Yukoners has been life-changing.

Applause

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to World Diabetes Day, which took place on November 14. Today I think about what needs to be done collectively and individually for better prevention, diagnosis, and management of diabetes. I want to especially thank the Yukon type 1 diabetes support network for their hard work advocating for Yukoners living with type 1 diabetes. Their efforts do not go unnoticed, and I'm pleased to see them in the House today.

This year marks 100 years since the discovery of insulin. While insulin has been a life-sustaining drug for many people living with diabetes, there are so many more who do not have access. For many Yukoners, getting insulin coverage is a long process with a lot of paperwork.

First Nation people continue to face higher risks of developing type 2 diabetes — more than any other group in Canada. With a legacy of colonialism, including residential schools and lasting inequality, our communities lack access to health education and nutritious, affordable foods.

As a territory, we still have work to do. With our continuous glucose monitoring program, we have seen what support can do for Yukoners with type 1 diabetes. We also have the unique responsibility to advocate beyond the territory.

To make this day truly count, I urge leaders in this House to push the federal government to come up with a national type 1 diabetes strategy. With access to insulin, community support, and proper education, we can leave so many of the issues faced by those living with diabetes behind.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling here today a document provided by the RCMP to Hidden Valley school parents at the meeting last week, entitled "Condensed Timeline with Salient Points", which, of course, is regarding the investigations related to Hidden Valley school.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have for tabling today the Yukon government's submission — the letter — to the Dawson Regional Planning Commission on the draft plan for the Dawson land use planning.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 6 — received

Clerk: Mr. Speaker and Hon. Members of the Assembly, I have had the honour to review a petition, being Petition No. 6 of the First Session of the 35th Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Leader of the Third Party on November 10, 2021.

The petition presented by the Leader of the Third Party meets the requirements as to form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Speaker: Accordingly, I declare Petition No. 6 is deemed to be read and received. Pursuant to Standing Order 67, the Executive Council shall provide a response to a petition which has been read and received within eight sitting days of its presentation. Therefore, the Executive Council response to Petition No. 6 shall be provided on or before November 25, 2021.

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House congratulates Alaska senators Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan and Congressman Don Young on their successful work to secure dedicated Shakwak funding that authorizes reconstruction of the Alaska Highway from the Alaska border at Beaver Creek to Haines Junction and the Haines Road from Haines Junction to Haines, Alaska as part of the bipartisan infrastructure deal that was passed in the United States House of Representatives on October 8, 2021, and signed by President Joe Biden on November 15, 2021.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House supports recommendations made by the acting chief medical officer of health that include vaccine mandates and proof of vaccination to access non-essential services.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to acknowledge that children under the age of six are a vulnerable population by expanding the vaccine mandate to all early-years professionals across the territory.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House does support the supervised consumption site operating at 6189 6th Avenue in downtown Whitehorse.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Housing initiatives fund

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today to speak of the fifth intake of the housing initiatives fund. I am pleased to announce that applications for this very active program are live today. I feel as though it has only been a few short months since I rose in the House to speak about the fourth successful intake, which is now supporting eight new housing projects in the Yukon. As a result of the past four intakes, the program is successfully supporting 40 projects. Of these, eight projects are completed, 20 projects are under construction, and work is in progress toward securing 12 additional project agreements. These projects will lead to the construction of more than 470 new homes in Yukon communities. Of these, approximately 275 will meet the definition of “affordable homes”.

Through the fifth intake launched today, we invite First Nation governments, First Nation development corporations, developers, contractors, community organizations, and the public to apply to this annual fund to support projects that will increase affordable housing options in their communities. Since the inception of the program in 2018-19, the Yukon government has allocated approximately \$3.6 million each year to this fund. The fund incentivizes the development of good quality, affordable housing and includes three funding streams: one for shovel-ready projects in Whitehorse, one for shovel-ready projects in communities, and one for project concepts.

This year, project applications can receive an increased amount of funding due to the unprecedented increase in construction costs and labour supply during the COVID-19 pandemic. Shovel-ready projects in Whitehorse and in rural Yukon can receive up to \$100,000 per unit and up to \$1 million per project.

Additional consideration will be given to projects that directly support the housing continuum in the Yukon and prioritize the needs of seniors, tenants earning less than Yukon Housing Corporation’s household income limits, people experiencing homelessness, youth ages 18 to 25, and First Nation projects. Due consideration will also be given to projects that support housing solutions for First Nation staffing strategies, for all levels of government, and the local business sector.

We are proud to continue with this initiative, which will make a very real difference to the housing landscape of the territory. We all have a role to play, working together, in finding a new way forward, and I encourage aspiring housing providers to check out the details of the fifth intake and apply for funding.

Together we can help support Yukoners in finding affordable places that they can call home.

Ms. Clarke: Housing is a priority issue for Yukoners. While we welcome the fifth intake of the housing initiatives fund, we are concerned about the short window. As the minister mentioned, the intake for applications opens today and closes on January 14, 2022. Many Yukoners are already thinking about the holiday season. We hope that releasing a fund

application period over the holiday season doesn’t negatively impact the opportunity for projects to apply.

With respect to this fund, what gaps in housing has it addressed? Can the minister explain how those gaps were identified? How exactly have they been addressed?

The minister says that \$3.6 million has been set aside each year for this fund. Can the minister tell us if all the funding was allocated over the previous four intakes?

This government has also been slow to get these houses to market. In May, the housing minister confirmed that only 65 of the 470 funded units have been built since the program was launched in 2018. Could the minister update us on the number of completed units?

As well, the Yukon Housing Corporation has hundreds of residents on a wait-list for housing. In fact, the size of the list has skyrocketed under the Liberals. Can the minister tell us if any of the units will be specifically earmarked for those on the housing wait-list?

While on this topic of housing development, the Liberals have promised to turn contaminated land in Marwell into housing lots. As a result, this could take many years to develop and there are various environmental criteria to meet along with potential YESAB processes. I am wondering if the minister has an update for us on the status of the grader station land and when those lots will be on the market.

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon NDP is, of course, in support of this initiative. Every day we are reminded that we are in a housing crisis. As winter sets in, the fear and exhaustion of precarious housing is getting more and more obvious, so we are very glad to see the government supporting the creation of more affordable housing in the territory. That said, we do have some questions about the fund.

The minister has told us that 275 out of 470 of the units built so far are considered affordable. That means that, of this fund for affordable housing, less than 60 percent has actually gone to affordable homes. We have over 400 people on the wait-list for Yukon Housing units, most of them because they can’t afford a home at current market rates, and yet almost half of our money earmarked for affordable housing development is not in fact going toward affordable homes. We can do better than that. Yukoners who are struggling to find a place to live that they can afford need us to do better than that.

We also have questions about how the government will make sure that these homes stay affordable. This is an investment of public money. We have a responsibility to make sure that it supports the people it is intended to support. How long will these homes be affordable for? How is this government making sure that Yukoners will still have access to these affordable homes in the years to come?

Finally, we are concerned about what is considered “affordable”. For this fund, the definition is “less than the median of rent or market price”. Given that both rents and home prices are skyrocketing, these units very well may not be affordable to many Yukoners, even if they are in the bottom half of the available options. Has this government considered a

definition of “affordable” that takes into account what Yukoners can actually afford?

So, with these questions, I will turn it back to the minister and I look forward to his answers.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I thank the members opposite for their questions. Just quickly, turning to the Official Opposition — it is November 15, and my experience in working in the private sector on the development side is that people are always working.

When opportunities like this come up for projects, they are going to work. I think we have almost two months here before we have an opportunity for people to do intake. From my experience, I think that is enough.

What you don’t want to have happen is to put all the work into tens of thousands of dollars and then have a government cancel it while you are delivering it to Yukon Housing Corporation. We don’t want that to happen, because I have experienced that as well. It is a lot of wasted money and time for the private sector.

But what we will do is that we won’t cancel. We will accept those applications. What we have done, in most cases, is that we have worked with the proponents to ensure that, if there is a back-and-forth that needs to happen — there are a number of groups right now with which we are trying to fine-tune their applications, taking into consideration some of the increased costs from the supply chain.

To answer other questions, we were at 65 units completed in the springtime. Now we are at 91 units, and we have another 100 that are about to be completed in the next number of months. We think that this is some very good progress as well.

Again, the comment from across the way was that this government is not very good at getting these houses built. There might be a misunderstanding. We provide money to groups — whether that be in Whitehorse or the communities — and then they build the projects. That was really casting some shade on the developers. We are just trying to help them build these projects. We want these projects to be in their hands, on their balance sheets, not for Yukon Housing Corporation to build them.

With Marwell, it is a multi-department approach. I think that the member opposite would lead you to believe that this is just one of the many things. Of course, our departments are working hard on Whistle Bend, and we are looking at a number of other pieces of land that we can hand over to the private sector.

The Marwell grader station is being looked at. I leave that to the Minister of Highways and Public Works to talk about, but Kwanlin Dün has first right of refusal on that, and they seem interested, but they do have a number of other areas that they want to work with us to develop.

Concerning the questions from the Third Party, we are deploying money for affordable housing. In many cases, the formula that the private sector uses is to have market rental with affordable — it’s not the only amount of money. That line of questioning would lead you to believe that it was the only money that we were putting into affordable housing. All one

has to do is look outside this building and look at the number of either buildings being completed or cranes that are in the air. Those are projects, in many cases, that are affordable housing projects. They are being funded through other lines of funding that we have or in partnership with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

We can have a debate about what the formula is for identifying affordability. We have closed out on housing, but I am willing to have that discussion with the member opposite during Question Period or outside of the Assembly. We do understand that it is difficult. It is a difficult time, and we have a lot of work to do. It is going to take years, but I thought it was important today to come and just update the House on some great things that are happening.

It is the community members and the business community that are getting this done for Yukoners. They are filling a very, very important gap.

If there are things that I missed from either the Official Opposition or the Third Party, I will do my best to get back and answer those questions.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Affordable housing

Ms. Clarke: Somehow in a territory with a land mass the size of France, we are experiencing a land shortage. This is significantly driving up the cost of a home. On May 18 of this year, the Minister of Community Services stated — and I quote: “... we have work underway on phase 6 of Whistle Bend for completion this summer. It will create some 171 lots for a planned release later this fall.”

Can the minister tell us how many of these 171 lots that he promised in the spring have been released so far?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I really appreciate the opportunity this afternoon to talk about land development within the City of Whitehorse and beyond —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will continue. We were talking about land development, and it is important to all Yukoners, as we have heard. We look forward to continuing progress on Whistle Bend and will continue to support the City of Whitehorse on this and other future development projects as we work together to make more lots available within the City of Whitehorse.

I want to thank the residents, contractors, and developers alike for their hard work to bring much-needed housing into the community and our officials for the great work that is seeing enormous progress on the next phases of the project, which is Whistle Bend. Development work is regularly assessed and planned. From time to time, planned work needs to shift. This is the case for phase 7. It was first tendered in the spring of 2021 but will be retendered in early fall 2022 to accommodate adjustments, redesign, and other considerations.

As for phase 6A, which is what we worked on this year, we have roughly 100 lots going into Whistle Bend this year.

Ms. Clarke: The average cost of a single detached home in Whitehorse is now over \$650,000. This is unaffordable and the government needs to do more.

In the spring, the minister stated — and I quote: “The phase 7 construction tender just closed. It will supply another 90 residential lots targeted for release in the fall of 2022.”

This morning, we looked on the government’s website and it says that a tender for phase 7 was terminated earlier this year. Can the minister update us on the construction tender for phase 7? Is it still on target to release 90 residential lots in the fall of 2022, as he stated in the spring?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I said in my earlier remarks, we are more than happy to talk about housing this afternoon. It is an issue of great importance to the people of the territory.

We are working on phase 7. We have restructured that contract. We have completed 6A this year. The contractor has finished his work on 6A. It has been signed off or is in the process of being signed off — I will have to get clarity on that from my officials. But I believe that there are 100 lots going to public tender this year as a result of the work done this summer. The remaining lots will be done next year. It will start, and then phase 7 will be tendered and will go ahead concurrently.

Our strong leadership has guided us through the pandemic and kept our economy going, Mr. Speaker. We are working to make sure that all Yukoners benefit from our territory’s economic growth. We are building a brighter future for our territory by investing in land across the territory, including Whistle Bend, and working with our municipal partners to make sure that land is available.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that this year we worked with the City of Whitehorse to release more than 250 lots — the largest lottery ever tendered — and this year we’re going to add another 100 lots to that total.

Ms. Clarke: The cost of a single detached home in Whitehorse has increased by nearly \$90,000 in just one year. This is partly due to delays by this government in getting lots to market.

In the spring, the minister stated this about the future of Whistle Bend — and I quote: “We are anticipating tendering phases 8 and 9 this year, as well as a lift station.” He went on to state that phase 8 will add another 50 lots in the fall of 2022.

Can the minister update us on whether or not he is living up to his commitment to tender phases 8 and 9 of Whistle Bend this year, and is phase 8 still on track to provide 50 lots in the fall of 2022?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Once again, we are talking about housing this afternoon on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, and I am happy to do so all afternoon if that is necessary.

I will say, Mr. Speaker, that I disagree vehemently with the preamble of the member opposite. The need for more lots in this territory did not arise overnight. This isn’t an issue unique to the territory. We are seeing land development throughout Canada being a hot topic. Indeed, we are seeing housing being a topic across the continent. COVID has had a profound impact on capital and where we are spending it and how the investments are going. So, we are seeing that here in the

territory, too. As I said, it is not an issue that has grown up overnight.

The Yukon Party long ignored the housing needs of Yukoners for more than a decade. I know that my predecessor, the former Minister of Community Services, the MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, got more lots out the door in his tenure than the previous government did in several years.

We have been working diligently on the housing file for the last four years. We are going to continue to work on that file. We have lots of lots coming onstream this year. We have had lots of lots in the past, and we are going to continue, as the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation said this afternoon —

Speaker: Order, please.

Question re: Land disposition process

Mr. Hassard: The release of lots in Whistle Bend earlier this year drew a lot of attention to the land lottery system that is used by the Yukon government. Some feel that the system can be manipulated and is not well suited to getting lots into the hands of everyday Yukoners who simply want to build their own home.

So, will the minister consider a review of the land lottery system to ensure that there is a balance between the needs of our contracting community as well as the needs of individual Yukon families who want to get a single lot to build their own home?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I want to just hearken from the other side of the floor. It is great to hear this question today. Certainly, upon coming into Energy, Mines and Resources in a previous role, and now with housing, we did have some concerns around the lottery system. I think that, during the election, there were some great ideas that came from opposition parties on ways to look at making sure that Yukoners who want to be here and make their lives here — after going away for possibly university or other experiences — do have that chance.

But it will be noted that, yes, I think that there has been some concern about the system. At least, during my time, we did bring in a third party to do some work on that system. Primarily, some of the concerns that we heard from the community were around Dutch Harbour. There was a lot of concern about how the Dutch Harbour lots went out, what had happened with those lots, who got those lots, and what the associated costs were. That led us to bring in a third party to do a bit of an analysis, but absolutely, there is work to do. I have talked to the private sector, and there are a lot of contractors who get frustrated with this system, but the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources can touch on the fact that we are looking at new ways to ensure that there are different categories of lots available to folks.

Mr. Hassard: I was actually asking the Minister of Community Services about lots in Whistle Bend.

Anyway, when the government releases hundreds of lots all at once, as the government did in January of this year, it puts a strain on the building community. Those who are lucky enough to win a lot have a two-year requirement to get a new house clad to weather. As many Yukoners have noticed, the

availability of contractors to meet the two-year requirement has become much more difficult. No one should be surprised that releasing hundreds of lots all at once and requiring those kinds of construction timelines put huge strains on the contracting community.

Will the government consider reviewing the two-year building requirement as part of an overall review of the land disposition process?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: It is an interesting piece brought to the conversation. I haven't heard of any folks in the private sector complaining that too much land had gone out to this point. In 2020, we saw record starts for residential building permits. In 2021, we have surpassed that in the first three quarters, so it seems that those folks are making the decision — the contractors — to seize that opportunity for their business and expand their business, which we have seen many contractors do.

Again, this is the first time that I have heard this concern, and it is something I can work with my colleagues on.

Again, I think that the first question was about the process of putting lots out. Our big concern is how we make sure that folks — which other parties have identified as a priority — whom we have invested in — they have gone to high school here and may have received the Yukon grant, they want to come home and, in many cases, have grandparents here, and they want to make their lives here and we need them to come here. That is what we are focused on.

It seems that the private sector is absolutely embracing this. That is why we see the GDP growth in 2020, and that is why the economy essentially led the country in 2020.

Mr. Hassard: It is unfortunate that the government doesn't actually listen to the questions that we ask over here on the opposition side of the Legislature, but I guess that it is probably why we don't get answers to questions that we are asking for Yukoners.

Another aspect of the land disposition system is financing. There are certain rules related to down payments as well as the timing of full payment that doesn't effectively balance the competing interests in the system. All of these factors need to be considered, Mr. Speaker.

Will the government commit to a review of the land lottery system with the goal of better balancing the needs of our contracting community with the needs of individual Yukon families that just want to buy a lot to build their family home?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Of course, it is not Community Services that does the work of the lottery system; it is Energy, Mines and Resources, so I think that we are listening to the questions opposite.

We are happy to work to improve the system over time. I think that it's always important to do a continuous review and see whether there are ways to improve the system. We think that how we get lots out is terribly important for the housing situation that we have. I agree with the Minister of Economic Development and Yukon Housing Corporation that our goal has been to get as many lots out and available to Yukoners as possible. Right now, we feel that this is the main goal.

We have not heard from the building and construction community that they are concerned that we have too many lots becoming available; it is just the contrary. What they want is more.

We will continue to do that and we are happy to do that. We are always happy to look at the system and try to make sure that it is as fair as possible for all Yukoners. I will make the commitment here on the floor of the Legislature that we will continue to look at the system and see how it can be improved for all Yukoners — homeowners, builders, and the whole of the community.

Question re: COVID-19 testing

Ms. Blake: On Wednesday, Yukoners were pleased that the government reopened the drive-through COVID testing site. Almost immediately, we began to hear about long lineups and long wait times for test results. We have heard from people waiting for hours in line and from people waiting, only to be turned away as the site ran out of tests and had to close early. This is a concern, especially in the middle of a widespread community outbreak.

What is being done to increase resources at the drive-through testing site, and will Yukoners not be turned away this week?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Science is, of course, the best guide when dealing with a pandemic, and we continue to follow the recommendations of our public health experts.

As noted in the preamble to the question, as late as a week ago Sunday, new recommendations came from the chief medical officer of health. They were quickly adapted and reviewed by the government. As early as last Monday night, there were new changes coming with respect to how Yukoners could be protected. That included the reopening of the drive-through testing site. That happened on Wednesday — all relatively quickly in order to have staff return to those roles. We are pleased that many people are using that facility and the opportunity for them, if they are showing symptoms, to attend at that location and to be tested for the purposes of determining what their next actions should be.

It is an opportunity for Yukoners, primarily those in Whitehorse but others as well, to find out if they are possibly subject to COVID-19. I look forward to further answering.

Ms. Blake: With the rapid increase in COVID cases, it is great to see so many Yukoners eager to get tested. Unfortunately, people are also experiencing longer waits for their test results. We have heard that folks are waiting for up to five days, which means that community transmission goes on longer than it should. This is true for people living in Whitehorse and in the communities.

Community members can get tested at their local health centre, but those tests need to come to Whitehorse before they are sent out of the territory.

What is the government doing to fix these delays for Yukon communities and speed up test results?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise. We certainly are focused on protecting the health and safety of Yukoners. There are a variety of ways

in which Yukoners can be tested. There is the drive-through testing site that was noted in the question. There are the appointments that can be made at the testing site, which I understand are also available depending on the day and the time that someone might choose. I can indicate that I'm well aware of the fact that those testing sites are operating at absolute capacity. Their goal is to serve Yukoners and to provide the tests that are being sought.

We have — and have always had, luckily, since March 2020 — an absolutely stellar testing regime. We are working with our partners in British Columbia. We are working with our partners at Health Canada to make sure that those testing opportunities are here for Yukoners and that those test results are as accurate as possible and provide the health information that individuals need to self-isolate or self-monitor following a test.

Ms. Blake: Yukoners who are experiencing symptoms can go to the COVID testing centre but by appointment only. Right now, same-day testing is not possible due to the increased number of individuals who require testing. We know that there are long wait times at the drive-through and long delays at the testing centre. Worse yet, people who want to book an appointment online for their first or second vaccines are being told — and I quote: “Sorry, there are no appointments currently available.”

The system is backed up and we need more capacity. What is the government doing to ensure that Yukoners with COVID symptoms can get tested quickly? When will Yukoners who want to get vaccinated now be able to?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: We have a testing and a contact-tracing strategy that has been effective in dealing with the spread of COVID-19 in our territory for almost 20 months now. We will continue to monitor and adjust to the situations as they develop. I appreciate that they are happening in real time. I also appreciate that some individuals may need to be waiting longer than they want to. I can also indicate that we are working extremely hard with our partners throughout the health care system to provide individuals who can assist with this goal.

We have asked health care officials to report on this absolutely every day and that the opportunities for individuals to be vaccinated remains to be open at the health care clinics across the territory or here in Whitehorse at the vaccine clinic, which is located in the old convention centre. Those opportunities remain available to book online.

I should also remind Yukoners that, if they are simply looking for a flu shot, we encourage them to do that booking through pharmacies, which is quite an easy and seamless process that allows appointments for individuals.

Question re: COVID-19 rapid testing

Ms. White: The Yukon is currently experiencing the highest rate of COVID-19 transmission in Canada. This has led to countless exposure notices in schools. After high numbers of COVID cases in Carmacks, the school council has temporarily closed the Tantalus School. We know that the federal government has provided the Yukon government with rapid-testing kits and is encouraging jurisdictions across the country

to use them. The federal government is even supplying rapid-testing kits free to any NGO or businesses who order them. Yukon parents have asked for rapid testing in schools and provinces across the country are already doing it.

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services explain why the government is still refusing to offer rapid testing to Yukoners?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am happy to answer that question: Because that is the medical advice that we are getting. Science is the best guide when dealing with a pandemic and we continue to follow the recommendations of our public health experts.

Our strong leadership has guided us through this pandemic to date and has kept our economy strong. Our focus as a government remains on protecting the health and safety of Yukoners. We understand the concerns of parents and other community members and the concerns around cases that have appeared in schools.

I have asked health officials to provide the number of COVID cases with a breakdown, perhaps, of the under-18 and over-18 population, which we hope will alleviate some concerns of parents, but we have heard from many constituents about the issue of rapid testing and we have shared that with the acting chief medical officer of health. In fact, I will elaborate on that in my next opportunity.

Ms. White: The Yukon government keeps making blanket statements about science, but the fact is that Yukoners are wondering what different science we have compared to the rest of the country that is using rapid tests in schools. Last week, another Yukon school faced an outbreak. The delay in getting results meant that more children were infected, more people had to self-isolate, and more parents had to miss work.

This has put tremendous stress on families and communities. This could have been avoided if rapid tests had been used in schools. The CMOH has said that she has concerns that rapid testing would overwhelm our labs, possibly because of the potential for false positives that need to be retested, but a false positive is better than a five-day delay to get any results at all.

Mr. Speaker, what is the government doing to address the CMOH's concerns and make rapid testing available to Yukon schools?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think that I need to correct just a few things that were there in the preamble to this question and the previous one. It is not the case that the Carmacks school has been closed. In fact, it has moved to remote learning as an opportunity for students to continue with their learning. That is something that all schools did, if you will remember, as far back as the spring of 2020. It is not something that is ideal, but it is certainly something that continues their opportunities to learn.

The other thing that I need to correct is this idea that we do not have rapid testing. We do, in fact, have rapid testing. It is deployed on the direction of the acting chief medical officer of health when there is an outbreak. It has been used in schools when they are looking to test a small group of individuals who may have been in contact with somebody who has tested positive for COVID-19. I think that those are incredibly important distinctions to make here.

It is not used broadly for asymptomatic individuals. The advice that we have is that it shouldn't be done at this time. The acting chief medical officer of health is not currently recommending the use of rapid testing in schools, other than what I have described. I will stop there, having corrected that information.

Ms. White: I stand corrected. The Tantalus School has closed its doors to students. That is a big difference, I guess.

It makes us wonder why Yukon is the only jurisdiction in Canada that is not reporting how many rapid tests it has used that it received from the federal government.

COVID is spreading rapidly among unvaccinated school-aged children. Case counts continue to rise, children continue to get sick, and people continue to have questions.

An unfortunate reality of COVID-19 is the spread of misinformation. People are afraid, confused, and frustrated. One thing is abundantly clear: When the government makes decisions behind closed doors, Yukoners are more likely to question those decisions. Right now, this is not something that the Yukon can afford.

Will the government enable the chief medical officer of health to appear as a witness in the Legislative Assembly to answer questions from the opposition parties?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am pleased to continue discussing this important issue here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. Our government's focus remains on protecting the health and safety of Yukoners. We do understand the concerns of parents and the concerns around cases in our schools, but I need to correct the member opposite. This is not where there is widespread COVID cases going through the schools. There have been cases identified in classes — absolutely. I am not correcting that whatsoever, but the concept that there is widespread COVID throughout the schools in Whitehorse or in other places has been denied and clarified by the chief medical officer of health.

I have asked the Health and Social Services officials to provide the number of COVID cases, which are released each day, with a breakdown of those patients who are under the age of 18 and over the age of 18, including hospitalizations — if it can be done while we are respecting privacy. I hope that this will go some way to alleviate the anxieties of families and parents. I think that there are lower numbers of children becoming sick than is generally considered to be the case. We do have rapid testing in schools and we will continue to use it appropriately.

Question re: Faro community support services

Mr. Hassard: We appreciate all the work that the government has done to provide service to the community of Faro immediately after the recent tragic events. However, now there are significant gaps in service and supports for that community. Several residents of Faro have reached out to the government about the significant lack of social services and mental health resources. To quote from an e-mail that was sent to the Premier and the Deputy Premier: "There are no supports in Faro for victims of domestic abuse."

So, what is the government doing to address this lack of support for victims of domestic abuse in the community of Faro?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I urge members of this Legislative Assembly to provide accurate information to Yukoners, because I think that it is our responsibility to do so, despite the fact that it doesn't always come, unfortunately, from the members opposite.

There are extensive services available for individuals who are victims of domestic violence, whether they be in Faro or anywhere here in the territory. Any individual who is seeking support can call Victim Services at 667-8500 or a toll-free number, 1-800-661-0408, extension 8500.

Services are available to Yukoners from Victim Services regardless of whether or not an application is being made to court — or any services involving court cases or charges being laid. Victim Services is open to all Yukoners who identify themselves as victims and need support and services. I do look forward to adding to this information as we go forward.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, these questions are coming directly from members of that community, and it's unfortunate that the minister feels that it is inaccurate information.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, that same e-mail highlights the lack of mental health support in Faro and how the government's mental health hub is greatly inadequate. Again, I'll quote from that e-mail: "Faro has inadequate mental health and substance use services. The HUB worker is based in Carmacks and is required to cover the four communities of Carmacks, Pelly Crossing, Faro, and Ross River. There is no way one person can provide enough support to four communities. This HUB worker is the only counselling support in Faro."

Will the government agree to immediately place permanent mental health and counselling supports in the community of Faro?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I don't often do this, but I certainly will commit to getting back to the member opposite with respect to the services available there in Faro, because my understanding is completely the opposite. I don't have a copy of this e-mail that the member opposite is reading from, but presumably it is somewhere on —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Order, please. The member has the floor.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to having received it and reading it with the opportunity of responding, of course, to the services that are being requested by whoever the author of that e-mail is.

That being said, I can indicate that early responses involved counsellors attending the Town of Faro, both immediately and in the days following the situation that existed there. I know that there were specialists sent to help individuals at the school, both students and teachers. I know that there were specialists sent to help individuals in the community who felt concern about what had happened and rightly so.

As a small reminder to the members opposite and to all Yukoners, I will hopefully get an opportunity to speak more about Victim Services.

Mr. Hassard: It really is unfortunate that the minister is so dismissive of such an important issue. Several years ago, the Liberal government made the decision to downsize the RCMP presence in Faro by amalgamating the detachment with Ross River. There are only two members based in Faro, and the scheduling system reportedly often results in only one member or no members on duty. Members of the community have indicated that this has reduced the service provided to Faro by the RCMP. As highlighted in the correspondence to the Premier and to the Deputy Premier, this means that, on several occasions, the community of Faro has to wait for an hour for the RCMP to arrive.

Will the government agree to immediately increase resources to the RCMP to allow them to increase presence and support for the community of Faro?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Our hearts obviously go out to the community of Faro as they are grappling with something that should never happen in anybody's community. I am glad that the members opposite are coming on board with the concept of more than one mental health supporter for more than four communities, because that's exactly what the Yukon Party had for our rural communities. They had two mental health nurses for all of rural Yukon.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Order, please. The member has the floor.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

We changed that around to have the four hubs, and we also hired over 20 more people than were there in the past.

I completely agree with the member opposite. One person for four communities is absolutely not enough.

We have provided immediate services and programs for the devastating effects of what happened in the community only a few short days ago. We will continue to work with the RCMP to make sure that the services that are needed through them are being provided. I want to thank Scott Sheppard and his team for all of the immediate supports and also Community Services as well as other departments for taking folks out who were there on the ground floor during these horrific events and putting extra supports in there on the short term. Over the longer term, we will continue to expand the programs that we have already expanded from the Yukon Party when it comes to mental health services, and we will continue to make sure that long-term supports are available for all communities in rural Yukon.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Unanimous consent re including comments by Joseph Novak in November 10, 2021 Hansard

Mr. Istchenko: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of the House to include in the November 10, 2021 Hansard the comments made by Joseph Novak prior to Tributes on that day, notwithstanding the Standing Orders and practices of the Legislative Assembly.

Speaker: The Member for Kluane has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of the House to include in the November 10, 2021 Hansard the

comments made by Joseph Novak prior to Tributes on that day, notwithstanding the Standing Orders and practices of the Legislative Assembly.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted. We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Bill No. 4: Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021) — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 4, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Clarke.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 4, entitled *Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Highways and Public Works that Bill No. 4, entitled *Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to take a few minutes to discuss the amendments and their context before the vote.

The amendments proposed will align Yukon's current *Motor Vehicles Act* with changes made to the *Criminal Code of Canada* in 2018. These changes have resulted in inaccurate section references within the current *Motor Vehicles Act* as well as inconsistencies between Yukon's law and the federal law. These outdated references and inconsistencies can create legal conflicts when enforcing the *Motor Vehicles Act* and the *Criminal Code of Canada* together.

To ensure the safety of Yukoners and to ensure that dangerous driving charges can be properly administered, these specific amendments are needed before the full rewrite of the *Motor Vehicles Act* is completed. In order to improve road safety for Yukoners and the travelling public, the amendments will also provide peace officers with additional enforcement tools in the form of expanded roadside suspension and impoundment authorities. The amendments proposed will align the *Motor Vehicles Act* with the changes made to the *Criminal Code* by updating section references and language for impaired-driving-related offences.

Also as a result of the amendments, the impairment threshold for blood alcohol content has been updated to match the *Criminal Code of Canada* language, which is .08 percent or above. The waiting periods for the ignition interlock program have been changed to reflect the same waiting periods as found in the *Criminal Code*. Mandatory roadside alcohol screening may now be conducted by peace officers upon demand as long as they are in possession of an approved screening device. Where there is a failure to comply with a mandatory alcohol screening, *Motor Vehicles Act* administrative penalties can now be applied.

Through the amendments, specific high-risk safety concerns will be addressed to improve public safety where peace officers have the authority to impose 90-day roadside

suspensions for criminal impairment with drugs or a combination of alcohol and drugs and to issue immediate roadside impoundments in response to failure to stop after a collision, fleeing from a peace officer, and existing driver suspensions.

The Government of Yukon would like to extend its appreciation for the time, energy, and valuable input contributed by members of the RCMP and the Driver Control Board. Over the past year, we have received support from the RCMP on the plans to align key sections of the current *Motor Vehicles Act* and changes made to the *Criminal Code of Canada*. The Driver Control Board provided practical input based on their experience administering portions of the act and are supportive of the amendments proposed.

In conclusion, I recommend that the members of the Legislature support the passing of the *Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021)* as a means to reflect the changes made to the *Criminal Code of Canada* while also addressing important safety issues that are needed now.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, once again, I will just be very brief in thanking the minister and the officials for providing us with the in-depth briefing. I said it at second reading and I'll say it again: We will be voting in favour of this bill.

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, we look forward to the full review of the *Motor Vehicles Act* as we mentioned in second reading. In the meantime, we will be supporting this bill.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I thank members opposite for their comments and for their support of these proposed amendments to the *Motor Vehicles Act*. I look forward to the vote on third reading.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the sessional order adopted by this House on October 12, 2021, Motion No. 84, the Minister of Education is participating in today's proceedings by teleconference.

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for third reading of Bill No. 4 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 4 has passed this House.

Bill No. 5: Act to Amend the Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act (2021) — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 5, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that Bill No. 5, entitled *Act to Amend the Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act (2021)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that Bill No. 5, entitled *Act to Amend the Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act (2021)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The *Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act* provides a legislative framework that allows for the administration and management of our territorial land by the Government of Yukon. This act currently does not allow for an effective management regime of resource roads. That's the whole purpose of the bill before us today. It is to allow us to get to regulation for resource roads. Amendments to the *Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act* focus on providing the authority for those resource road regulations to be enacted and administered.

I want to thank all members of the Legislature for their debate at second reading and for the healthy conversation that we had around Committee of the Whole. While the act amendments will assist in moving toward the completion of the resource road regulation, they are not the end of the line, as I discussed. Energy, Mines and Resources is currently working with Justice to draft the regulation.

I wanted to try to provide a few comments back based on the debate that we had at Committee of the Whole just to update the House on some of that development, both from debate at second reading and Committee of the Whole.

First of all, I recognize the interest of industry in getting a better understanding of how the resource road regulation will define how security will be calculated and used. We are finalizing security requirements for the resource road regulation. Part of this work includes reviewing and adapting the current security matrix used by Energy, Mines and

the current security matrix used by Energy, Mines and Resources for mining land use permits. Mining and land administrators will continue to work together to further harmonize and clarify the process of calculating security.

I will provide a few comments here today regarding use of security for maintenance. Permit holders will be responsible for maintenance of a resource road, and they cannot use security for this purpose. Primary permit holders will be responsible for the design, construction, use, operation, maintenance, closure, decommissioning, and reclamation and remediation of the road. In some cases, this requirement can and will be shared through user agreements with the secondary permit holders who are using the same road.

Though a resource road is not considered a private road, it is intended to be a restricted access road for only permitted resource users, which means that the Government of Yukon will not have the duty to maintain the road. The holder of a primary permit will have that responsibility for maintenance of the road, along with any secondary users that they may have agreements with. However, in certain circumstances where a permit holder has not maintained a resource road according to the standards set in their permit, the proposed regulation allows the Government of Yukon, if necessary, to suspend the permit until such time as the permit holder completes the work to the appropriate level of the permit.

If the permit holder is unable to complete the maintenance necessary to ensure that the road is safe for all users, the Government of Yukon may choose to further suspend or cancel the permit. Security could then be used to maintain, fix, or decommission the road, depending on the circumstances.

I know that these are details, but it is important to remember why the resource road regulation is being developed. It is to safeguard the Yukon's environment and ensure the safety of Yukoners and to allow there to be access to places that otherwise we would not want to open up broadly.

The purpose of this regulation is to set limits on the amount of spider-webbing of roads in the territory due to outdated resource legislation and to provide ongoing management of these roads from construction to closure while discouraging the development of resource roads that lead into the backcountry when no longer needed. This will also allow us to address the impacts of resource roads up front.

We will continue to provide updates as necessary to this House, to industry, and to stakeholders as we move forward with the finalization of the regulation. We have also made a commitment to consult with Yukon First Nations on the draft resource road regulation.

In closing, I would like to thank the Members of the Legislative Assembly for their participation in debating this bill. I am confident that the amended legislation, if passed today, will contribute to a robust resource road regulation — one that limits, mitigates, and reverses the impacts that development can have on the Yukon environment and contributes to a progressive management regime when it comes to our major industry partners and projects for years to come.

Mr. Kent: It gives me pleasure, as critic for Energy, Mines and Resources for the Official Opposition, to stand today and speak at third reading. We will be supporting this bill at third reading. I do understand that it is essentially enabling legislation to allow for the development of a regulation. I am not sure if the minister has any closing comments at third reading here today, but I didn't hear whether or not he was willing to refer this regulation to the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments. That was part of our discussion, I think, during Committee. Hopefully, he has a chance to clarify that, if it is something that he will do. Obviously, the standings of the House are such that the government is in a minority position. We feel that it is important for all Members of the Legislative Assembly to have an opportunity to review this regulation before it is enacted, as we normally haven't had that opportunity in the past.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and we look forward to hopefully the minister addressing that in his closing remarks.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for his third reading remarks about the amendments to the *Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act*. Again, I thank the officials for the thorough briefing that we had and the exchange of information when we were asking questions in Committee of the Whole.

The Yukon NDP will be supporting these amendments.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I thank the Member for Copperbelt South for reminding me about the interest to bring the regulation to the standing committee. I must admit that I will have to give that some thought, but I appreciate his request.

I also would like to just acknowledge the hard work of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Department of Justice in getting here. They have been doing a lot of work on successor legislation on forestry and on lands. There has been a lot of work that has been ongoing, but this is, I think, an important piece for Yukoners. It is nice to hear that all of us in the House feel that this is an important regulation to get at.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for third reading of Bill No. 5 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 5 has passed this House.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. Blake): Order, please. Committee of the Whole will come to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 202: Second Appropriation Act 2021-22 — continued

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Highways and Public Works — continued

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Madam Chair, I have some brief preliminary comments and I look forward to the questions from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. The preliminary comments I would make today are just in relation to the late-breaking news that the Shakwak project appears to be back online for funding.

We are certainly very excited about that and we look forward to discussions with the State of Alaska in order to determine what the budget will be, going forward, but as indicated by the Member for Kluane — and I have just confirmed with my officials — the president of the United States, President Biden, signed the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* into law today, which includes a line item for Shakwak.

Briefly, Madam Chair, the Shakwak agreement is a Canada-US cost-sharing arrangement to fund and maintain the northern section of the Alaska Highway and the Haines Road. Under the agreement, parts of the north Alaska Highway and the Haines Road are to be upgraded to a modern all-weather paved two-lane highway. The agreement states that the US is to pay for the reconstruction and Canada will maintain the highway. Canada will also provide the necessary right-of-way for the reconstruction funding for this agreement which, as the members opposite will know, ran out in 2019, before the full 520-kilometre upgrade was completed. To complete the upgrade, it is estimated that it will cost approximately \$500 million Canadian. The cost is relatively high on account of the 185-kilometre portion of the highway between Destruction Bay and Beaver Creek which is built on deteriorating or impermanent permafrost.

The *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*, also known as the bipartisan infrastructure bill, is a bill introduced in the 117th US Congress that includes potential and new funding opportunities for the Shakwak agreement. In total, the deal includes \$550 billion in new federal investments in America's infrastructure over five years.

As I indicated at the outset of my comments, Madam Chair, the act explicitly mentions the Alaska Highway from the Alaska border at Beaver Creek, Yukon Territory, to Haines Junction in Canada, and the Haines cut-off highway from Haines Junction in Canada to Haines, Alaska.

The *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* was passed in the US Senate on August 10, 2021, and, as indicated, has been signed into law today, November 15, 2021. With respect to this infrastructure area, during the 2020-21 fiscal year, Highways and Public Works spent \$3.93 million on the capital and maintenance costs of the north Alaska Highway. Inspections carried out in July 2020 confirmed significant road damage as a result of thawing permafrost in the northern sections of the Alaska Highway. Members of this House who have had the opportunity to drive that section will know that it can represent a challenge. Thawing permafrost can also cause significant cracking along the road shoulders, creating safety issues for highway users.

In fall 2002, HPW changed several sections along the highway to gravel. This was done as a mitigation strategy due to the significant movement from thawing permafrost. Moving forward, we anticipate lower costs maintaining these gravel sections over the winter. Normally, highway maintenance costs in permafrost areas can be up to five times higher than in non-permafrost areas.

In 2020, we also completed the installation of thermosyphons at Dry Creek, kilometre 1841 of the Alaska Highway, near Beaver Creek. The thermosyphons are helping

to cool the underlying permafrost foundation and stabilize the highway. We are currently monitoring their performance.

As indicated, all members of the House will be excited to hear the news from the United States of America that the Shakwak funding appears to be back online. We certainly look forward to improving our highway infrastructure in the designated Shakwak areas.

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the officials for being here today to help the minister as we work through Highways and Public Works debate this afternoon.

The first question I have for the minister is — I'm wondering if he could provide the House with an idea of how many unvaccinated Highways and Public Works employees will be affected by the new vaccine mandate by having to take leave without pay. While he's up, could the minister let us know which branches that these employees are in?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. The member opposite will know that the deadline date for confirmation of first vaccination is November 30 of this year. The opportunity to provide the attestation window as to vaccination status — as I am advised by my colleague, the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission — has just opened today. All I would have for the member right now is anecdotal reports from the various branches of HPW, but currently it appears that those numbers will be quite low.

Mr. Hassard: Obviously, the minister has told us that he has some anecdotal numbers, and they appear low, so would the minister provide the House with those numbers, please?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Madam Chair, there are two issues. Firstly, there will be this process of attestation and the numbers will be fluid. I would also be reluctant to answer questions from the member opposite with respect to some of the small branches of Highways and Public Works because that will obviously tend to identify members.

What I can say is — and the member opposite will know this — that at the airport, because it is a federal facility but we have territorial employees who either work at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport or have occasion to enter the airport, they had to provide their attestation as of today. That information is just coming in now; we don't have that data. I have some privacy concerns, which I can certainly allay for myself. If there are, then I can provide that information back to the member opposite as I am able. That is where we are at.

Of course, even before this Sitting is finished, we will have a pretty good idea from a pan-YG perspective as to what the number of persons who are unable to continue to work on December 1 is, by virtue of the fact they are not prepared to provide that attestation.

Mr. Hassard: In terms of privacy concerns, I am certainly not asking the minister to provide us with any names, birthdates, or social insurance numbers of those who aren't vaccinated. It was announced on October 15 that this was coming into effect. It's November 15, so that is a month ago. It will be 15 days from now that this will come into effect. I would certainly hope that the minister would have a fairly good idea. He has told us previously today that there are anecdotal

numbers. We are not asking for any private information, so I would really hope that the minister can provide us with those anecdotal numbers. I think this is very important. It's pretty important stuff, so we would really like to know what we are looking at.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I thank the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin for the question. As indicated, I will look into the potential privacy concerns. I do remain concerned about the small branches of HPW. My concerns remain; however, what I would say to the member opposite is that I will, if able, provide information that is disclosable to the House.

I think we will leave it at that. That's where that response is for now.

Mr. Hassard: So, it is interesting that the minister is concerned about privacy issues. If he doesn't want to provide us with the branches, that is understandable, but I think that it is important that Yukoners know what those anecdotal numbers are. He talked about privacy, as I said, but on October 19, the Deputy Premier told the media that the Yukon government was at approximately 80 percent. So, obviously this isn't embargoed information or secret information, so we are just curious as to what has changed in the last month and what is transpiring in the Department of Highways and Public Works, because that is the department that this minister is responsible for. I guess I will just try once more, Madam Chair — if the minister could please provide us with those anecdotal numbers on vaccination for Highways and Public Works employees.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As indicated, I will return to the House, as able, with the information. The members opposite will know that the number of adults — Yukon citizens above the age of 18 — who have at least their first dose is now well over 90 percent — we are at 91 or 92 percent — and second dose, I believe, is around 86 or 87 percent. Obviously, extrapolated onto the public service, it is going to be similar, if I were to hazard an educated estimate. We will know between now and November 30, and as I have indicated to the member opposite, as able, I will provide the data to the House.

Mr. Hassard: Let's use the minister's 91-percent number, just for simple terms. What does the minister plan on doing on December 1 when supposedly nine percent of the Highways and Public Works staff don't show up for work?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As I have been advised — and as, of course, one would expect of any large organization — there are business continuity plans in place for Highways and Public Works so that, if required, assets will be deployed to ensure that essential services are provided. Those discussions are ongoing.

What I would also say at this juncture is that Yukon is not the only jurisdiction in North America or, in fact, the world that has taken these types of positions with respect to public safety and public health and vaccine mandates.

Very large organizations, like the City of Toronto — the entire public service at the City of Toronto — and, of course, the federal public service and the police and fire department in New York — so we have examples going forward where the actual numbers — when the decision date actually occurred — were ultimately in the low single digits. So, significantly — potentially even less than five percent — at least planning for

numbers to be higher than that. But there are some big sample sizes. Like I said, the City of Toronto is going to have a lot more employees than the Yukon government workforce. The firefighters in New York and the police department in New York will have significantly — well, yes, there will be significantly more employees in both of those organizations. The federal public service — also a much bigger organization. So, we have a pretty significant sample size going forward.

When the deadline was provided for the employees to have to provide, for the purposes of health and public safety — and that deadline actually came forward — the numbers were ultimately significantly lower than had been anticipated. Further, in reading articles, there was uptake after the deadline. It was not insignificant uptake after the deadline in the first few days, the first week, or even the first two weeks after the deadline for those big organizations.

So, is it possible that the Yukon is significantly different from the City of Toronto, the New York fire department, the New York police department, or the federal public service? I suppose that it is possible, but the member opposite will know, having read the articles themselves, I'm sure, that the ultimate uptake for the federal public service is something like 97 or 98 percent.

Could there be service disruption for non-essential services? That's certainly possible, but the hard-working staff at Highways and Public Works are working on business continuity plans. We have confidence — and I have confidence in my department — that we will be able to deliver essential services to all Yukoners as they would expect those services to be provided.

Mr. Hassard: I will just remind the minister that, when he talks about all those other places in the world, the Yukon is the only place in the world where I am allowed to stand in the Legislature and ask questions on behalf of my constituents and all Yukoners. That is my concern, obviously. What are we going to do on December 1 here in the Yukon? Not in Toronto or anywhere else — I am talking about here in the Yukon.

The minister has talked about this plan, and the department is putting this plan forward. I guess I would like to know when that plan will be complete. Will the minister table that plan here in the Legislature so that Yukoners can have the confidence that, on December 1 when they are heading to Whitehorse for their doctor's appointment from wherever in the Yukon, they can be assured that the roads are going to be safe — and all the rest of the things that go on, on a daily basis, Madam Chair?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I can advise that the Department Highways and Public Works has always had in its consideration, business continuity plans, but certainly it gained sharp focus in March 2020. This plan has been evolving over the course of the last 18, 19, or 20 months to ensure business continuity during a global pandemic. In my view, this department has done an admirable job with respect to that.

Among many of the successes — or the logistical deliverables that continued — was keeping the Motor Vehicles office open to in-person services. I am advised that our Motor Vehicles branch office was one of the only offices in Canada that remained open.

With respect to all of the things that Highways and Public Works does — but certainly keeping the roads to the appropriate standard and other things — this has been first and foremost in the operational minds of the Department of Highways and Public Works before — but certainly since — the outbreak of the COVID-19 global pandemic. This business continuity plan continues to be developed, refined, and worked upon.

During COVID-19, it was certainly foreseeable that one could have been missing or perhaps one wasn't able to have a full complement of employees even from March 2020 until now, so HPW has been having to deal with that for 19 or 20 months already.

My team is certainly alive to the issue of having to continue to provide essential services to all Yukoners, to all communities, on all roads, in all circumstances. With respect to the member opposite's question about whether the business continuity plan is disclosable or not, I will get back to the member once I can determine if it can be disclosed.

Mr. Hassard: Madam Chair, we certainly look forward to finding out if that's information that will be shared with the Legislative Assembly. We certainly hope that it is. We will wait and see for December 1 to see what will happen. In light of the time, I would like to move on.

In the spring here in the Legislature, the Member for Watson Lake brought forward the motion on private members' day regarding a crosswalk in her community. As you will remember, all members of the Legislature voted in favour of providing the community of Watson Lake with that much-needed crosswalk. However, when the Member for Watson Lake wrote to the Minister for Highways and Public Works this fall to see where she could find that line item in the budget, the response that the member got back was essentially that Watson Lake would not be getting the crosswalk that obviously was unanimously voted in favour of here in the Legislature. I guess I'll just give the minister the opportunity to stand and either correct the record if I am incorrect or at least provide us with some further information in regard to that crosswalk.

Madam Chair, sorry — it was actually two activated crosswalks, not just the one. I apologize.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite.

The member opposite and the Member for Watson Lake will have the legislative return which will provide some of that for the record; however, I can provide a bit of an update as well.

The Department of Highways and Public Works makes decisions on pedestrian safety based on a number of factors, including the criteria outlined in the Yukon street-lighting guidelines. Some of the considering factors are traffic volume, roadway complexity, pedestrian volume, and collision history. The department assessed the need for pedestrian-activated crosswalks this summer. Based on the above — those engineering standards — at that time, no new pedestrian lights were deemed to be required.

However, the department has also met with ATCO as part of a review on Watson Lake's overall lighting infrastructure. The department will be working with ATCO to further enhance

street lighting on the Alaska Highway. I can also advise that the department also repainted the Watson Lake crosswalks to ensure that they were clearly visible to motorists.

The update I can provide, which may change the dialogue perhaps, is that officials from the Department of Highways and Public Works are actually meeting with the RCMP, the Town of Watson Lake, and the Liard First Nation today. I can also advise that I met by Zoom with the Town of Watson Lake within the last 10 days or so. I am certainly committed to travelling to Watson Lake to meet with both the Town of Watson Lake and the Liard First Nation. I commit to meet with the RCMP as well.

We will be receiving the input and the opinions of the RCMP, the Town of Watson Lake, and the Liard First Nation this afternoon. I will likely be in a position to report back to the House or to the Member for Watson Lake on those discussions. As members opposite will know, there are Yukon street-lighting guidelines and we are governed by those with respect to the expenditure of resources. If on second reflection an alternate course is indicated, I am certainly open to being briefed on the findings of the meetings which are taking place today.

Mr. Hassard: I guess my question for the minister would be: Why did the government vote in favour of this motion? In particular, why would the minister have voted in favour of it?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I will just confirm for the record the wording of the motion. It is at page 148 of Hansard from May 19, 2021. The motion was: "THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to initiate upgrades to the two Alaska Highway crosswalks in Watson Lake to include pedestrian-activated flashing lights." We are in the process of initiating upgrades. We also know that Highways and Public Works prioritizes work based on safety considerations, traffic volumes, and budgetary constraints.

With respect to the motion specifically, we are engaging with the community and we are in the process of initiating upgrades.

Mr. Hassard: Madam Chair, I don't believe that any of that information was in the correspondence received by the Member for Watson Lake, so we certainly look forward to seeing that new information come to light and hope that the government does move forward with this important project.

If I could move on to some brush and weed control — it is always a highlight topic here in the Legislature. I have a few questions. The first one is particularly on brush and weed control between Johnsons Crossing and Lone Tree Creek. There was an e-mail on which I was cc'd on August 27 from Highways and Public Works that talked about brush and weed control between kilometre 1264, Lone Tree, and 1295, Johnsons Crossing. The e-mail said that Highways and Public Works had a contractor that would be coming in to do that particular work in the next couple of weeks. At one point, a contractor from Fort Nelson showed up for two or three days, made a terrible mess, and loaded up and left. Since then, there has been no activity.

I am curious if the minister could provide my constituents with some sort of an update as to when they plan on seeing this brush and weed control cleaned up and completed in that area of kilometre 1264 to 1295 of the Alaska Highway.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Madam Chair, I will commit to a return to the member with respect to his specific inquiry. I believe it was kilometre 1264 to kilometre 1295. It's certainly unfortunate that the response back that the member opposite has received from a constituent or from a concerned Yukoner is that the job was not done to a safe and acceptable manner —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Okay, so — or wholly inadequate. So, yes, we'll have to get back.

But briefly, Madam Chair, the Yukon government has implemented a roadway safety improvement program that is designed to make Yukon's roads safer through brushing, improved lane marking, removing hazards in the right-of-way, and installing and maintaining more roadside barriers. The government is ensuring that Yukoners have safe roads to travel on throughout the year.

Since 2019, over \$15 million has been allocated to the program. The department has brushed over 1,800 kilometres along Yukon highways, installed over seven kilometres of new barriers, and painted over 2,600 kilometres of highway lanes.

Of course, wildlife interactions represent a real danger for drivers in the Yukon. Frequent brushing allows drivers to better see wildlife crossings and helps to prevent collisions. Brushing also keeps signs visible, decreases snow accumulation and drifting, and improves roadway drainage.

Highways and Public Works works with First Nations and municipalities prior to rewarding a brushing contract and inspects the areas brushed before the contract is closed.

In July 2021, the Department of Highways and Public Works sent 698 letters to property owners who were near upcoming vegetation control work. The letters directed owners to an online platform that mapped the locations where vegetation control may be taking place, noted the specifications of planned vegetation control, and also explained the benefits of vegetation control.

The member opposite will know that, in 2018, Yukon's primary highways were assessed for vehicle hazards. This assessment led to the development of a Yukon roadside barrier guideline, which includes a system to identify vehicle hazards across the highway network. The roadway safety improvement program will schedule maintenance using the highway classification framework. This framework classifies Yukon highways based on traffic volumes, type of use, and other socio-economic factors. Vegetation control is completed through contracts and through memorandums of understanding with First Nations and Yukon municipalities. Each contract contains detailed specifications for vegetation control that specify stem height, clearing width, steep slopes, riparian zones, inside curves for sightline distance, and salvageable wood. Brushing specifications must meet or exceed, preventing wildlife injuries from right-of-way vegetation control. These specifications were recommended by the Yukon Department of

Environment, Carcross/Tagish First Nation, and the Southern Lakes Caribou Steering Committee.

Through this organized and, we hope, fairly logical and consistent program, on an annual basis, Highways and Public Works has been able to make real headway in creating the safer sight pass that I have talked about here. I certainly can see that some of the contracts may not live up to what they ought to have been, and I certainly will commit to the member opposite to looking into the contract that appears to have been let with respect to kilometre 1264 to kilometre 1295 and will advise maybe what went sideways and what the plans are to provide for additional brushing in that area.

Mr. Hassard: I certainly appreciate the minister looking into that for me.

He talked about the brushing, and it appears that he was referring back to a government news release of April 10, 2019 when they talked about the modernized highway network management system being announced.

At that time, the government said that, in the life cycle of this program — a six-year program — a total of 6,700 kilometres of road will be brushed in the Yukon. The minister said in his previous answer that there has been 1,700 kilometres done, so that is roughly 25 percent of that 6,500 kilometres. It has been roughly 30 months since they made the announcement. So, out of six years, I guess we will say that 38 percent of the time has been used up and 25 percent of the work has been done.

I will ask the minister if he can provide us with information — if the work will be advanced in the coming future, if there will be more brushing contracts out in order to bridge the difference in where they are headed, or if the government has abandoned the idea of getting the 6,700 kilometres done in that six-year timeline.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I did receive a briefing on the brushing roadway safety improvement program this summer. I can advise that, broadly, this government is on track. There may have been some COVID-related delays in delivering the service, but firstly, my understanding — and I can be corrected — is that we are looking at approximately 55 to 100 kilometres of road. The 6,700 kilometres might be that there was some overlap. I can return with the number.

I can also provide the member opposite with a general outline of the three-year report over the last three years as to how things are going with respect to the brushing program. By creating a benchmark, or a start point, and classifying the roads from 1 to 6, the member opposite will know that there is only one classification 1, which is the Whitehorse corridor. Classification 2 is predictable. It's most of the Alaska Highway and part of the north Klondike Highway, and then it goes down from there to classification 6. The number 1 classification roads will, of course, receive the most attention and it will come down.

What I would also say is that, over the course of the summer, I did receive e-mails and correspondence from the general public and from members opposite, so if there is actually an acute safety concern, we are not completely wed to this program. Obviously, there will be one-offs where acute

safety concerns or visibility concerns exist and we will respond if able.

By creating this classification system and by doing it in a fairly predictable, logical way on an annual basis, we are still optimistic that we will reach the objectives that we set out for the six-year plan.

I am prepared to provide the member opposite with the three-year report, but the information that I have from my officials and from my department is that this program is on schedule. It may have to be slightly accelerated, but I will be briefed on this program.

Mr. Hassard: I look forward to seeing that information from the minister. I'm happy to hear he will provide us with that three-year update.

Again, Madam Chair, just for the record, I'm reading this information right from a news release signed by the previous Minister of Highways and Public Works. His quotes are in it, talking about how we give citizens more certainty, et cetera. So, if we've shorted the Yukon highways by 1,200 kilometres, I certainly look forward to hearing which ones got taken away.

Madam Chair, the minister talked about the ability to do one-offs when dealing with brush and weed control. I certainly appreciate that. It is not a question but a note, I guess, for the minister — when I travelled to Faro this fall, it was September 22, I believe, and the leaves were still out, but we had an early snowfall. There were quite a few miles through the Little Salmon Lake area where the road was barely one lane wide, and it was right down the centre line because the trees with the leaves and the heavy, wet snow had all folded over and essentially were blocking both lanes. I certainly hope that the minister will take into consideration a one-off for that particular area of highway.

Madam Chair, moving along, I had a question for the minister about their buy-back policy when it comes to procurement contracts. If the government puts out a tender to purchase 10 trucks, how they determine the successful bidder quite often has a buy-back clause into it, so it affects the overall price.

But, to the best of my knowledge, I can't ever recall the government using the buy-back clause, so if the minister could provide us with some information on this and inform the House if that is the case — or, if it isn't the case, how often is the buy-back clause used in highways procurement?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I think that we will have to add this to my department's homework list to return to the member opposite. I will certainly commit to return to the member with the answer to his question, which is a fairly technical and specific question. We will get the answer for him.

Mr. Hassard: As the minister hopefully knows, quite often the initial low bidder is not accepted when involving these buy-back type of contracts, so when the minister is doing his homework or getting the department to do their homework — and I apologize, I am not trying to create work for the department, but I think it's important for Yukoners to know — could we also find out how much extra in the last five years the government has spent when purchasing equipment by not using

the low bidder because of the buy-back clause when in fact the buy-back clause wasn't used?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I thank the member opposite for the question.

I think we have the various elements of the question on the record. We will do our best to get back to him on those.

Mr. Hassard: I look forward to receiving that information.

I have a couple of questions regarding the Nisutlin Bay bridge. I am just curious if the minister can inform the House if the tender has now been let for the Nisutlin Bay bridge, and, if not, when will that tender be let?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The Nisutlin Bay bridge is a critical link along the Alaska Highway, and it is an important landmark for Teslin. The bridge was built in 1953 but is now nearing the end of its life and needs to be replaced. The Yukon government is working closely with the Teslin Tlingit Council to construct a new bridge. We expect to begin construction in the 2022-23 fiscal year. The replacement of the bridge is estimated to take three years to complete.

In the spring of 2019, the Yukon government and the Teslin Tlingit Council signed a project charter for the bridge replacement. Through the agreement, we are working together to build a safe, reliable structure that can accommodate an increase in traffic while also improving access for pedestrians and cyclists.

In the spring of 2020, we engaged with residents and business owners of Teslin, the Teslin Tlingit Council, and the Village of Teslin to discuss potential options for the bridge. This past winter, we hosted an open house in Teslin to present the design of the bridge to the community. In August, during the Teslin Tlingit Council's annual general assembly, Highways and Public Works had an information booth for citizens to learn more about the project. Highways and Public Works continues to engage the public and specific stakeholders on this project as it moves forward.

The project has been approved for funding under the Building Canada fund, provincial-territorial infrastructure component, small communities fund. Transfer payment agreements were signed with the Teslin Tlingit Council that addressed project planning and implementation support and environmental and socio-economic baseline studies. The contract for design work was signed on November 21, 2019 to WSP Canada Group Ltd. As part of the \$3-million budget, \$1.76 million will be spent on design components this year.

The bridge will be replaced by constructing a new bridge beside the existing bridge.

A virtual information session was held on December 1, 2020 for all contractors interested in the project. A qualified source list, a QSL, was established on January 19, 2021 with two contractors — Graham Infrastructure LP and Peter Kiewit Sons ULC — qualifying. YESAB is being used to address the environmental and socio-economic requirements to officially advance the project.

The answer to your question, according to my officials, the tender will close on December 8.

Mr. Hassard: I would just like to thank the Highways and Public Works folks who have done a lot of work going to the community and really engaging with the community and the Teslin Tlingit Council, the Village of Teslin, and citizens in general — the open houses that have taken place — and, as well, Kiewit and Graham for spending as much time in the community and even hosting an open house here in Whitehorse with the Teslin Tlingit Council at their Whitehorse offices last week and just really engaging with the community.

In light of that, I'm curious if the minister could inform or update the House on which parts of the contract will be available to local contractors and which part of the contract has been broken out for Teslin Tlingit Council. I would certainly appreciate any information in that regard that would be beneficial to community members of Teslin.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I would also echo the member opposite's comments with respect to the engagement of the technical staff from Highways and Public Works with respect to shepherding this project along, including open houses both in Whitehorse and in Teslin and the effective engagement with the Teslin Tlingit Council as well.

I can advise that we will certainly be in a better position to advise with respect to the specific benefits that will accrue to the Teslin Tlingit Council and to the Village of Teslin in general once the tender closes on December 8 and the successful proponent is identified, but we certainly are cognizant of the fact that this is to be a collaborative project and that real benefit is expected to be provided to both the Teslin Tlingit Council and to the Village of Teslin in this very significant infrastructure project. It is probably the most significant infrastructure project that has been in the Village of Teslin or in Teslin Tlingit territory in recent memory.

Seeing the time, Madam Chair, perhaps we could have a break.

Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Hassard: Madam Chair, in light of the time, this will be my last question and I will turn the floor over to the NDP, but hopefully I will get the opportunity to come back because I certainly have many more questions for the good folks in the Department of Highways and Public Works.

I was speaking to a Yukoner the other day, and he was concerned that he had lost out in bidding on a tender in his community to a government employee who is living in government housing. He felt that it was unfair that this person was living in subsidized housing and bidding on government

contracts. I was just curious if the minister or if the officials had any information or if there were any thoughts as to government employees, particularly those living in subsidized housing, bidding on government contracts.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: If the member opposite wishes to provide me with some additional detail of the concerned constituent — perhaps not identifying, but just providing the facts. I know that the member opposite has outlined the facts as he understands them to be, but I certainly can provide that hypothetical to my department and return to the member opposite as to the appropriateness or the lack of appropriateness or whether it's a transaction or conduct that ought not to occur or should occur. Like I said, if the member opposite could provide, without identifying the person, just the general proposition, I will return to him with my understanding as to concerns that may arise from that scenario or that hypothetical that he has provided to me today.

Mr. Hassard: Obviously, I will send an e-mail to the minister with the particulars on this one. It probably is not something that we want to discuss openly. I was just curious if there was a policy in general or not. I will follow up with an e-mail to the minister and we can go from there.

Ms. Tredger: I want to extend my thanks to the officials for being here again today with us and helping to answer all of our questions.

I would like to start by asking about the app that is being developed for businesses to scan proof of vaccinations. My understanding is that it is Highways and Public Works that is taking responsibility for that approximately. I'm wondering if I could have an update about where it's at. I am not sure if businesses are already able to use that approximately. If so, how is it going?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I do have a more complete answer for the member opposite that I could provide if you have a subsequent question with respect to all of the mechanics of how it will operate. But, at the highest level, you have likely heard in the media that we are optimistic that we will be able to launch on Wednesday, November 17. The app has been provided to both Google and to Apple for review and, I suppose, accreditation so that it will be available in both of those environments. It will be free of charge to Yukoners.

I will just provide a bit of background here, but I am certainly cognizant of the fact that the member opposite will likely have some follow-up questions. Briefly, Health and Social Services and Highways and Public Works have partnered to deploy a digital proof of vaccination credential for Yukon residents. That service launched on September 7, 2021. Yukon's proof of vaccination credential is currently the authoritative document for Yukoners to provide proof when required.

As of November 15, 2021, over 22,300 Yukoners have received their credential. Yukoners' proof of vaccination credential contains information on an individual's COVID-19 status and basic personal identifiers, such as their name and date of birth. It does not contain any other health information, such as their personal health number.

We have coordinated with the federal government and other jurisdictions in Canada to ensure that our credential is consistent in appearance and in the information that it presents. Anti-fraud measures have been built into the credential through the use of a QR code. The proof of vaccination credential includes the use of digital signatures called "public key" and "private key" encryption to ensure that the document has not been altered after it was created. This is the same technology that banks and online retailers use to verify transactions.

Use of the proof of vaccination credential verifier app verifies a document when it scans the QR code, providing a high level of confidence that the certificate is authentic and has not been altered. The Yukon government is working with all jurisdictions to ensure that their QR reader apps will recognize Yukon's proof of vaccination credentials. Yukon's credentials have been designed to integrate with the federal ArriveCan app so that it can be used for international travel. Currently, Yukoners will use their Yukon-issued credential for international travel.

Yukon's credential is an acceptable form of proof in every province in Canada. I saw some previous correspondence that Alberta maybe wasn't in, but the bottom line is that travelers are advised to confirm the rules of any specific destination before they travel. I have some additional information, but I think that's the basic outline. I can provide some additional information as well.

Ms. Tredger: Thank you for that answer. That is helpful, and that is the level that I was looking at. I do have a follow-up question. The minister mentioned security. I had a constituent tell me today that they were told by a government official on the COVID line that the department has stopped e-mailing vaccine certificates because it is not considered secure. Can the minister confirm if that is true?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I thank the member for the question. I understand that the e-mail option was discontinued — perhaps even as recently as last night — and that, in consultation with the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the PDF direct download to a phone was deemed to be the preferred option. It was obviously pretty efficient to get the e-mail — to have it as an option. Perhaps anticipating the concern from the member opposite, of course, we want to have these credentials and the QR code be as accessible as possible, also recognizing that not everyone has a smartphone, but there is still the option to have your credentials mailed — an issue with that too, I suppose, as you require an address; I get it. But we will certainly make best efforts to ensure that no individuals fall between the cracks. Obviously, 22,300 Yukoners have already availed themselves of these credentials. It has certainly been extremely popular.

The advice, I understand, of the privacy commissioner was to consider discontinuing the e-mail option.

Ms. Tredger: Madam Chair, I just wanted to add on a little bit of information that I have been hearing of constituents who weren't able to get it e-mailed to them today, as it has been discontinued, and were not able to access it in any way whatsoever. They were told there was a glitch and that they would have to wait. They could try again tomorrow; they could try again in a week, but in the meantime, that does leave people

without proof of vaccinations. I just want to flag that for the minister. I'll leave COVID and move on.

I have questions about a few different roads that I would like to ask. One of the roads is that I wonder if there is an update on the paving of the Robert Campbell Highway to Ross River. I also wanted to ask about the Dempster Highway. I know that my colleague wrote the minister a letter back over the summer and he responded talking about how the highway maintenance is prioritized, but I wonder if there are any plans for broader upgrades to the Dempster Highway. It is such an important highway. It is notoriously dangerous and it is really essential for a lot of services. Chiefs in the Northwest Territories have highlighted that it is in really rough shape and that is a major concern. I wonder if there are any plans to upgrade this highway.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The first topic will be the Dempster. The Yukon government is making a number of investments to ensure that Canada's first all-weather road to cross the Arctic Circle remains safe and open for business. \$5.16 million has been budgeted for operation and maintenance along the Dempster Highway for the 2021-22 fiscal year. The Yukon government is also engaging with other counterparts in the Northwest Territories to look at ways to collaborate on improvements to the Dempster Highway. The Yukon government is focusing investments on the southern section of the Dempster Highway up to the northern boundary of the Tombstone Territorial Park. This section of highway receives moderate traffic volumes — about 80 vehicles a day — compared to the northern part of the highway, which receives less traffic — about 50 vehicles a day. I can certainly see that there must be seasonal fluctuations.

I inquired of my officials as to whether either a resource gateway program or the national trade corridor fund would necessarily be eligible for either one of those for consideration with the Dempster. The quick response is likely not, but certainly additional conversations could occur between the governments of the Northwest Territories, Canada, and the Yukon with respect to upgrading the Dempster. As the member opposite can likely appreciate, a significant upgrade of the Dempster, which is 740 kilometres of gravel, would be a really significant expense.

The member will also know that the road from Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk was completed within the last three or four years, and that had many, many challenges — perhaps even more significant challenges than one would have in rehabilitating the Dempster significantly. It was multiple hundreds of millions of dollars for, I think, a one-hour drive or just over one hour perhaps. I know that there was a significant expense, but I certainly take the member opposite's point that all efforts should be made by GNWT, YG, and Canada as well to ensure that this road remains in the best possible condition it can, given the fact that it is likely one of the most remote and that, as far as absolute traffic volume, it does not have a great deal of annual traffic volume. That's the long answer of saying that YG's HPW plans on spending \$5.16 million on operation and maintenance for this fiscal year for the Dempster.

On the Robert Campbell Highway, which is the kilometre portion between Ross River and Faro, with respect to possible BST treatment, in April 2020, a project agreement for the Robert Campbell Highway component was signed with the Ross River Dena Council. That agreement does exist; it has been entered into. The road rehabilitation project runs from kilometre 354.9 to kilometre 414.4. The right-of-way clearing contracts have been awarded for this component of the Robert Campbell Highway. This was a direct award contracted to the Ross River Dena Council citizen-owned company.

What has to occur is that the Yukon government has to continue to work with the Ross River Dena Council to implement the project agreement. We are certainly prepared to meet with the Ross River Dena Council to move this project forward because an application with YESAB — the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board — for that one section part of the Robert Campbell Highway was submitted on October 1, 2020. I am advised that YESAB approval has been granted for that approximately four-kilometre section.

We are certainly keen to move forward on this project to improve that stretch of highway, which I have been on many times over the years. We are certainly prepared to continue to dialogue with the Ross River Dena Council to reach a satisfactory agreement and to mobilize to get this project going.

Ms. Tredger: I thank the member for that answer.

I would like to ask about the Alaska Highway running through Whitehorse. I have a couple of questions. The first is that accessibility advocates have noted that the crossing lights at Hillcrest Drive and Burns Road on the Alaska Highway are difficult and sometimes impossible to use for people in wheelchairs. I am wondering if there is any money budgeted to resolve that issue and make those lights accessible to everyone.

I also wonder about the cycling paths. My understanding is that the next phase of the upgrade south of the airport includes an unpaved path on the west side of the highway, but cycling advocates have requested that it be moved to the east side and that it be paved. I am wondering if that has happened.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The first question, with respect to accessibility of the lights at Hillcrest — and I recall receiving communication from the Leader of the Third Party with respect to this topic, and we were provisionally planning to meet, I believe, with one of the constituents who had an issue. Perhaps with the coming of the Sitting or whatever — so there was an intervening event — but that meeting did not occur with that constituent. I did see a photo indicating that, for a mobility-challenged person in a wheelchair, there were access issues by the light standard and the concrete, part of which, I believe, will have to ultimately be cut to provide greater access.

I have been advised by my officials that some additional asphalt work has been done — but conceding that there still are some deficiencies — but that there is a plan to return in the spring to, among other things, install a button at an appropriate height for someone in a mobile wheelchair. Also, some of the concrete will probably have to be cut to provide greater accessibility.

As I said, the Leader of the Third Party did bring this to my attention, and I think that we might have even been planning a site visit — or to meet with the constituent — but that did not occur. I do understand the nature of the concern.

I believe that the other question as about multi-use trails in the south access area. I have certainly received some correspondence from user groups, primarily cyclists and persons who would be using other types of active transportation. They have certainly made their views clear that they want to have multi-use trails in that area. What I can say to the member opposite is that we are working with the city on design plans for those trails. Putting on my hat as Minister of Highways and Public Works and also as Minister of Environment, I will certainly do everything in my power to provide design features that promote active transportation. So, that project is still in the planning phase, but I certainly take the comments from the member opposite. I have heard those and have received correspondence with respect to the whole south access-Alaska Highway area, which is in the current planning phase.

Ms. Tredger: I thank the member for that answer. That was my final question, so I just want to say thank you again to the officials for their help today.

Mr. Hassard: If I could just go back to where I left off, Madam Chair — the minister was talking about the Teslin bridge contract closing on December 8 and that information would come out then as to what parts of the contract would be available to local contractors. I am curious why that information wouldn't be available to citizens of the community before the job is awarded or before it closes, because obviously the two proponents bidding on the tender need as much information as they can have prior to the closing date. So, if that information was available, it would give citizens a better opportunity to approach the two prospective contractors to, I guess, give them their sales pitch as to what they are available to do and what the costs would be — if the minister maybe could just provide us with some insight as to why that information wouldn't be available prior to the job closing.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The Member for Pelly-Nisutlin will be aware that there were open houses and that the qualified proponents presented their First Nation participation plan. Pursuant to that, there is a community resources list that lists local contractors. Within that, there is a list of opportunities available. The member opposite will appreciate that I don't have the details on this, but we will see what we can get, perhaps after the contract ends — including granular pit development, hauling, camp services, land lease, camp batch plants, storage, lay-down area preparation, construction management and subcontracting construction work, environmental monitoring, general employment, and training opportunities. That list was provided at the open houses as being areas where the Teslin Tlingit Council or the Village of Teslin presumably could be involved.

I grant you that obviously there will be details that would have to be worked out, but it is my understanding that, at the open house in Teslin and at the open house in Whitehorse, these

opportunities were presented as part of the First Nation participation plan and general community participation plan.

Mr. Hassard: Now, normally before Highways and Public Works does any projects, I guess — but particularly large projects — we see, months in advance, the gravel sources announced or that there is procurement to have crush. I'm curious — we have not seen anything in terms of aggregate for this particular project. We know that the one pit at Deadman Creek is depleted. I'm curious, Madam Chair, if the minister could provide me with some information as to where the government plans on getting the aggregate for this particular project.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: This is a fairly specific question on an ongoing procurement. I will return to the member, as able, but as I indicated in my response a few hours ago, this tender is closing on December 8, so there is more to come after that.

Mr. Hassard: As the minister just said himself, this tender closes on December 8. There are several thousand cubic metres of aggregate to be hauled and placed. I would certainly hope that, with potentially three weeks before the tender closes, the government would know where they are sourcing the aggregate, because it is obviously going to have a fairly significant impact on the price. I don't know how anyone would bid on the job if they didn't know if they would be hauling the aggregate two kilometres, 42 kilometres, or whatever the case may be. I will try again and see if maybe someone has sent the minister the information. Hopefully, he knows where Highways and Public Works plans on sourcing the aggregate for this particular project, Madam Chair.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As I indicated to the member opposite, I will make inquiries with the department and get back to the member opposite as I can.

Mr. Hassard: It is certainly concerning that the minister and the officials wouldn't know the answer to that question, but I guess it is what it is.

Madam Chair, I am wondering: Will the minister get back to me with that information prior to the tender closing on December 8 or prior to this House rising on December 2 or 3 or whatever it is as well?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I will provide a response prior to the end of this session.

Mr. Hassard: I certainly look forward to that response.

I have several items that I want to try to touch on, but I will try a few on First Nation procurement, if I could, before we run out of time today. I am curious if the minister could tell us: Is there a First Nation component in regard to the third-party agreements?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The Yukon First Nation procurement policy will strengthen outcomes for Yukon First Nation people and businesses, providing opportunities to be active partners in the economy. Through this policy, the Yukon government commits to: providing Yukon First Nation businesses with increased opportunities to participate in the Yukon's economy; ensuring that procurement processes are undertaken in accordance with Yukon First Nation final agreements and advancing reconciliation; renewing the relationships with

Yukon First Nations; and respecting treaty and aboriginal rights.

The Yukon government listened to the public and has taken a phased approach to the implementation of this important policy to ensure that Yukon businesses, Yukon First Nations, and Yukon government employees had adequate time to prepare and meaningfully engage.

An industry working group was established to provide a forum for interested stakeholders to make their voices heard by providing input and advice as tools and processes were developed to support the implementation of this policy.

Over the past nine months, we held six industry working group meetings and 18 sub-working group meetings to discuss topics such as the Monitor and Review Committee, bid value reductions, and the verification process and to test and comment on tools, guides, and operational requirements for these topics.

At the industry working group table, we have heard concerns and problem-solved together. We have taken action to incorporate industry perspectives and feedback into the implementation of this policy. In fact, we co-developed terms of reference for a new Monitor and Review Committee that will include Yukon government, Yukon First Nations, and industry representatives. This committee will be responsible for monitoring outcomes of the policy and providing recommendations to the Yukon government for interventions or continuous improvement. The committee has begun to meet.

We have heard the concerns from industry representatives about the use of bid value reductions. Should major market impacts be observed in a particular sector, the government will work with its Yukon First Nation partners to quickly adjust the parameters around bid value reductions. Bid value reductions are an important way to meet the policy's objectives. This will allow benefits to flow to the entire Yukon economy, which is a win-win for all businesses in the territory.

The Yukon First Nation procurement policy was approved on December 9, 2020 and endorsed through a joint announcement with Yukon First Nation leaders at the Yukon Forum on December 11, 2020. The policy came into effect on February 22, 2021 with additional measures being implemented on April 26, 2021 and October 4, 2021.

The policy was drafted collaboratively with Yukon First Nations. Information sessions provided an overview of the policy to the business community, including the procurement business community, chambers of commerce, and Yukon businesses.

The Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce will now be managing the business registry and verification process. It is essential that all businesses on the registry be verified to ensure that the benefits of the policy are going to the right people. For Yukon First Nation businesses to be added to this registry and earn bid value reductions, they will need to be verified. For Yukon First Nation businesses to be verified, they will need to submit the appropriate documentation to verify that they meet the definition of a "Yukon First Nation business" under the policy.

The Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce already works to support and represent Yukon First Nation-owned businesses. It made sense for those businesses to go through the verification process with an entity that they already had a relationship with. It is essential that all businesses on the registry meet the definition of a "Yukon First Nation business" under the policy. By having only verified businesses on the registry, everyone can feel confident that all businesses meet the requirements of the policy when accessing the registry. Verification allows us to ensure that the bid value reductions related to ownership and business location are only applied to verified Yukon First Nation businesses.

Depending upon the complexity of the ownership structure, it will take up to 15 business days, recognizing that, in the initial months, there may be a large volume of applicants, which could impact timelines.

A Yukon First Nation business meets one of the following criteria:

"(i) a corporation or not-for-profit corporation where one or more Yukon First Nations is the direct or beneficial owner of 100% of the shares of the corporation;

"(ii) a sole proprietorship owned by a Yukon First Nation Person;

"(iii) a partnership of limited partnership where at least 50% of the partnership is owned by a Yukon First Nation Person or an organization described in (a) or (b); or

"(iv) a corporation with at least 51% of the corporation's voting shares owned by a Yukon First Nation Person or an organization described in (a) or (b); or

"(v) a not-for-profit organization in good standing under the *Societies Act* with at least 51% of its membership comprised of Yukon First Nations people.

"A sole proprietorship owned by a non-Yukon First Nations Person, which supports a Yukon First Nation spouse or common law partner, and/or a Yukon First Nations family, may qualify as a Yukon First Nations Business."

We are in the middle of the initial two-month verification period. The Yukon government wanted to ensure that this initial verification period was done right and fairly. We have around 35 businesses currently on the registry that might submit their verification documents and others who may want to join. To avoid only registering one business at a time and uploading them to the registry individually, we are trying to make the process fair by completing all of the verifications during the eight-week period and uploading them at the same time. After the process of the initial verifications, the wait times to be verified will be, as stated, up to 15 business days depending on the complexity of the business structures.

During this interim period, which is from October 4 until early December, businesses will not be able to receive the ownership and community bid value reduction until the eight-week verification period is complete, as no Yukon First Nation business will be on the business registry until that time period is complete. After the eight-week period, businesses that are verified will be eligible for ownership and community bid value reductions. Bid value reductions for labour will come into effect immediately.

The Monitor and Review Committee is made up of four Yukon First Nation representatives, four industry representatives, and three Yukon government representatives. The Monitor and Review Committee will be tasked with evaluating the effectiveness of the policy and making recommendations to Yukon government on areas of improvement.

The year-end review committee will be tasked with evaluating the effectiveness of the policy and with making recommendations to Yukon government on areas of improvement. The committee will meet monthly and will produce an annual report reviewing the Yukon First Nation procurement policy with recommendations to the government on how to improve the policy and its implementation.

What will success look like? Up until now, we have not been able to definitively know whether a business is Yukon First Nation-owned or not. With a verified business registry, this is something that Yukon will now be able to track. With the full implementation of the policy now in effect, success over the long term will include having an increasing proportion of government contracts awarded to Yukon First Nation-owned businesses as well as increased subcontracting opportunities for Yukon First Nation businesses. We should also see an increase in employment opportunities for Yukon First Nation persons. We will be tracking this.

Success will also be demonstrated with the negotiation of community development agreements with Yukon First Nation governments for large projects that are happening in their traditional territory. These agreements will ensure that benefits from these large projects will stay in their communities, whether through training opportunities or apprenticeships and business development.

The Yukon First Nation procurement policy is unique to the Yukon. It is based on promising practices carried out by governments across Canada and as far away as Australia. The development of procurement policies that strive to increase indigenous participation in government procurement is happening across the country as we speak.

To answer the member opposite's question, the third-party book, also perhaps known as "the third-party equipment list", will be out to tender by early December, and the Yukon First Nation procurement policy will apply.

Madam Chair, seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale North that the Chair report progress.

Are you agreed?

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

May the House have a report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the House do now adjourn.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to

Speaker: This House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.

The following documents were filed November 15, 2021:

35-1-17

Condensed Timeline with Salient Points, document prepared by the RCMP for meeting with parents at Hidden Valley Elementary School November 9, 2021 (Cathers)

35-1-18

Draft plan for the Dawson planning region, letter re (dated November 1, 2021) from Hon. John Streicker, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, and Hon. Nils Clarke, Minister of Environment, to the Dawson Regional Planning Commission (Streicker)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 32

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, November 16, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier Government House Leader* Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
Hon. Nils Clarke	Riverdale North	Minister of Highways and Public Works; Environment
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Government House Leader* Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Minister of Economic Development; Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Jeanie McLean	Mountainview	Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

Currie Dixon	Leader of the Official Opposition Copperbelt North	Scott Kent	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Yvonne Clarke	Porter Creek Centre	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Emily Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Annie Blake	Vuntut Gwitchin

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

*Government House Leader: Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee to November 4, 2021; Hon. John Streicker from November 5, 2021

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon**

Tuesday, November 16, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.
We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will proceed with the Order Paper.
Introduction of visitors.
Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of International Day for Tolerance and Transgender Day of Remembrance

Hon. Ms. McLean: I rise on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government today to pay tribute to International Day for Tolerance and Transgender Day of Remembrance.

International Day for Tolerance began in 1995 when UNESCO's member states adopted a *Declaration of Principles on Tolerance*. Today is the day for fostering mutual understanding among people around the globe and here in Yukon. Tolerance is respect, acceptance, and appreciation of rich diversity of our world cultures, our forms of expression, and ways of being human. Unfortunately, we have seen what intolerance can do to our society, Mr. Speaker. Intolerance can lead and has led to violence.

As many of you know, Transgender Day of Remembrance is coming up later this week. It is a day when we honour, remember, and mourn transgender diverse people whom we have lost to anti-trans violence.

Transgender Day of Remembrance was started in 1999 by transgender advocate Gwendolyn Ann Smith as a vigil to honour the memory of Rita Hester, a transgender woman who was killed for simply being herself. The violence and intolerance that trans people face is pervasive in our culture. All of this violence is well known, deeply felt, and too often personally experienced by transgender people in our community. This is something that our trans children, friends, family, co-workers, and neighbours deal with regularly.

On this International Day of Tolerance and with Transgender Day of Remembrance advancing, there are other things to remember. Remember that the people most likely to be killed for being trans and who experience the most violence on all levels are trans women of colour. Trans solidarity means challenging our own internalized prejudice and unconscious bias. Remember that trans people deserve a community and a world in which they feel safe, respected, and honoured. Remember that trans rights are human rights. While we as a society are making great strides toward inclusion, there is still much work to be done in modernizing attitudes regarding trans and gender-diverse folks in our community.

There are several organizations that I would like to highlight today. These organizations are doing amazing work to break down stereotypes, take a stand, and reject transphobia.

All Genders Yukon Society has been providing access to mental health services for trans, two-spirit, and non-binary Yukoners as well as their network of loved ones. This work is vital in protecting mental wellness and strengthening the bond between our community members. Trans Resource Yukon is a webpage created by and for trans people to provide them with access to medical resources and information and to help them navigate the services available.

Queer Yukon has launched an initiative to provide trans or non-binary people access to gender gear, which would otherwise be difficult to come by. We are so proud of the partnership with Queer Yukon to establish the first Yukon Pride Centre. They recently welcomed community members and partners into the space to help design a welcoming, inclusive space that meets Yukoners' needs. The work of Queer Yukon Society has been a foundational support for the LGBTQ2S+ community in Yukon. Their work brings Yukoners together and honours and celebrates inclusivity and diversity.

We are lucky to live in a territory full of diversity. I am optimistic for the future — a future in which trans folks are free to be able to dress, speak, and behave how they want to, free from intolerance and violence. Progress is being made here in Yukon due in large part to these community organizations. They hold us to account and remind us that we must do better. It has been my honour and pleasure to work closely with many of the organizations during the development of the LGBTQ2S+ action plan.

In closing, today and every day, I challenge all members and all Yukoners to stand up against transphobia. I challenge you to continue learning more about LGBTQ2S+ issues and find new ways to be an ally in all spaces in which you can add your voice.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize today as International Day for Tolerance and Saturday, November 20 as the Transgender Day of Remembrance.

The declaration of principles on tolerance from UNESCO on November 16, 1995 states, "Peace, if it is not to fail, must be founded on the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind." "Moral and intellectual solidarity" is not easy to define and even less so to achieve. The idea of achieving intellectual or moral solidarity or a truly united world seems far-fetched. The concept of global tolerance seems unreachable, just based on the amount of intolerance that we see. Tolerance, to many, comes naturally. Respect, acceptance, and appreciation are fundamental to self. Unfortunately, as easily as tolerance comes to many, intolerance comes easier to some.

Transgender Awareness Week is happening right now and takes place yearly from November 3 to 19. During this time, individuals, allies, and organizations work to spread awareness about the discrimination, prejudice, and violence faced by the transgender community. On Saturday, we observed the Transgender Day of Remembrance. In reality, this day should not exist. If tolerance was truly observed, it wouldn't. It is on

this day that we recognize and honour the two-spirited, transgender, and non-conforming individuals who have lost their lives to transphobic violence. We remember Rita Hester, whose death in 1998 sparked this legacy of remembrance and all those — too many more — who have lost their lives since.

We must continue to work on ourselves individually but also help guide others toward embracing tolerance, acceptance, and respect. This is where the concept of education comes in. In order to spread tolerance, we must spread knowledge of its importance. Our schools must continue to instill the importance of tolerance in our children, to continue building on the anti-bullying, harassment, and violence policies that exist, and to ensure that those policies are enforced and that every one of our children walks through the doors of their school to a safe, secure, and respectful environment.

So be kind, thoughtful, and respectful. Embrace differences and embrace education. Tolerance is not something to be celebrated once a year on a proclaimed day of awareness; it should be central in our lives as we live individually and as a society each day of the year.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP to recognize the Transgender Day of Remembrance and to mourn the deaths of all of the transpeople who have been killed this year. We can talk about action, about what we are doing and failing to do, and we should talk about that. We should be talking about that all year long. But November 20 is a day of mourning, and today I simply want to mourn the lives that have been lost.

On Saturday, Queer Yukon is hosting a silent vigil at Rotary Park, and I hope that many of us will be there. The vigil is — and I quote: "... to commemorate and collectively mourn the loss of all Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Non-Binary people who have lost their lives to transphobic violence; the majority of which is faced by Indigenous, Black, & Latinx communities. Through this vigil we express love and respect for our Trans kin in the face of indifference and hatred."

Today and every day of the year, let us all find ways to express love and respect for the trans members of our community and to fight and end the indifference and hatred.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling a letter from the Yukon Chamber of Commerce in support of the proposed better buildings loans program.

I also have for tabling a letter from the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce in support of the proposed better buildings loans program.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Pursuant to section 16 of the *Liquor Act*, I have for tabling the Yukon Liquor Corporation 2021 annual report.

Speaker: Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the State of Alaska to ensure that the funding in the US bipartisan infrastructure deal allocated for upgrades to the Alaska Highway and the Haines Road is made available for work in the 2022 construction season.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to make available in Yukon non-mRNA COVID-19 vaccine options that have been approved by the Government of Canada.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to promptly begin work with the community of Destruction Bay as well as the Kluane First Nation toward reopening the volunteer fire department in Destruction Bay, Yukon.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide adequate and consistent support to Yukoners on probation by facilitating that adult probation officers have more presence or live full time in rural Yukon communities.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to make COVID-19 vaccines available to inmates at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre by November 30, 2021.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Robert Service School

Hon. Ms. McLean: I rise today to share that work has begun on the addition of a four-classroom structure at the Robert Service School campus in Dawson City.

We are pleased to be working with the Government of Canada as part of the Investing in Canada infrastructure program as we create this new space for our children to learn and grow. In the summer of 2019, mould was discovered in portable classrooms on the site of the school. Following this discovery, planning for the decommission of the portable and the replacement of the learning space commenced, and classes were accommodated in the main building of Robert Service School. With the help and collaboration of the community

partners, the school was able to adjust and will continue to do so as construction is underway. This is a testament to the school and the community's adaptability and resilience while also navigating the pandemic.

As we discussed a path forward, the school council, school staff, the Dawson City community, and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation provided their vision for the new learning space.

With support of the Government of Canada through the Investing in Canada infrastructure program, we moved forward with the expansion plans for a new modernized learning environment. We are grateful to be able to benefit from the Investing in Canada infrastructure program, which helps address the challenges faced by communities throughout the country. We share the goal of building strong, dynamic, and inclusive communities, ensuring that families across Canada have access to modern, reliable services that help to improve quality of life.

On October 6, 2021, site excavation for the addition began by Wildstone Construction. This additional learning space will be an essential part of providing students and staff with the best possible environments to learn and grow. The new addition will be approximately 438 square metres, providing four classrooms and two staff offices along with two washroom facilities.

To inform decisions as we undergo construction, we will continue to work alongside our school council, staff, community, and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation. We are excited that this additional space will provide the school with more options for how to arrange and locate the programming for their students in ways that can maximize collaboration and effectiveness.

As we move closer to construction, we look forward to providing regular updates to keep Yukoners informed on our progress on this new school. We are committed to investing in our communities and supporting Yukoners to lead happy, healthy lives. This extension of the Robert Service School will ensure a modernized learning space and will support teachers, staff, and the community for years to come.

Mr. Kent: I am pleased to respond to this ministerial statement on the Robert Service School portables in Dawson City. However, I will note that the address given by the minister is substantially different from the copy that was provided to the Official Opposition this morning.

However, we are happy that the school community is getting the additional learning space that they need. What is curious for us is that the Liberals are now doing ministerial statements on their failed projects as well, and what is disappointing is how long it took us to get here and how much it is going to cost Yukoners.

The Yukon Party first raised Dawson parents' concerns about the old portables in 2017 when we were made aware of them at the Dawson City gold show. The government did nothing to move on this file for two years, until 2019 when they discovered mould in the existing portables that were scheduled to be renovated and they decided to demolish them instead. That year, it wasn't until the eleventh hour that they informed the school community and left them scrambling for space just

before the school year started. In fact, Mr. Speaker, access-to-information requests demonstrate that the Liberals were aware of the issue of mould in classrooms for months before telling parents.

This project will be so late by the time it is ready for occupancy that it will have been five years after this was first raised in the Legislative Assembly, although I am sure that the Deputy Premier will be relieved that it is being completed by a local contractor. After all, at the time, she claimed up and down in the 2018 Fall Sitting that there were no local suppliers of portables and that — and I quote: "Our subsequent investigation revealed that there are virtually no portables available in western Canada for purchase..." So, once again, it turns out that the Deputy Premier shared incorrect information with Yukoners.

Now we should talk about the ballooning budget for this project. What started out as a \$2.1-million project to upgrade the existing portables doubled to \$4 million in the spring budget, and now, just a few months later, we are being asked to add another \$2.4 million, which brings the cost to a whopping \$6.4 million. That's right, Mr. Speaker. The Liberals have mismanaged this project so badly that it is several years late and a breathtaking three times the original budget.

It is interesting that the minister is now referring to this project as an "extension" of the existing school when, in October 18 briefing documents from the Department of Education, it is still referred to as "modular classrooms" or "portables". Of course, this wouldn't be the first time that the current Minister of Education isn't up to speed on what is happening in her department.

So, I have some questions that I am hoping that the minister can address during her response today. How much did the portables recently installed at Golden Horn Elementary School and Selkirk Elementary School in Whitehorse cost? The previous minister spoke about a 10-year capital plan for schools and, of course, never delivered on that promise. So, will the current minister commit to completing and tabling that document?

This, to my knowledge, is the first recoverable school project funded by Canada. Are there other projects in Education being considered under this model, and if so, which ones?

We will look forward to discussing this and other education initiatives with the minister once Education is called for debate this fall.

Ms. White: When mould was discovered in the walls and ceilings of the old portables back in 2019, replacement was the obvious and only option. The Yukon NDP are pleased to know that some of the educational space needs of Dawson City are being addressed now, two years later, and five years after the concerns were first brought forward by parents.

There is so much going on in schools across the Yukon needing the attention of this government and this minister. Perhaps if the minister had made a statement about the successful recruitment of principals, teachers, or educational assistants, it would be worthy of a ministerial statement. We know that the Department of Education is failing our students

when there are ongoing staff shortages. Children with special needs are not getting the supports that they need. Children in classes with a revolving door of temporary teachers and fill-ins are not getting the education that is their right to receive. Teachers too are facing challenges — lack of leadership and vacant administration positions and a lack of support in the classroom when educational assistants are not available.

We have already asked teachers to pivot and adapt during COVID, and now they are dealing with COVID in their classroom, student absenteeism from parents keeping students home, and all of this piled on top of their regular duties. A ministerial statement about how this government is supporting teachers through this pandemic would be appropriate.

Or the minister could have made a statement addressing the very real and pressing issues facing two elementary schools right now. It seems like a missed opportunity to speak about the ongoing issues at Hidden Valley school, where the minister could share the outcome of last week's parent meeting and the department's path forward.

Or this could be an opportunity to speak and let this House know about the next steps at Jack Hulland Elementary School.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we are happy to hear of the changes underway at Robert Service School but feel that this was a lost opportunity to hear from the minister on more critical issues in the Department of Education.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to rise today to talk about this really good news story for the community of Dawson City and the new portable extension of the school that is being completed as we speak. The work has started. I think that this is a good news story for the community where those issues were identified some time ago. We have made the necessary steps and worked with our partners in Canada to ensure that this project goes forward. Again, there were a lot of challenges during the pandemic, for sure.

I think that I will go in a bit of different direction here since the members opposite have raised the overall education system. I am aware, absolutely, that our schools are under incredible stress at this time, not only through the pandemic, but through a decade and a half of lack of attention to our education system, which was — I will have to remind Yukoners — under the direct management of the Yukon Party. I am glad to see that the Yukon Party is now taking interest in education, but I want to talk a little bit more about the steps that we have taken as a government to address the very deep concerns that we all have with our education system.

We have been in receipt of a failing report card of the Yukon Party, which is the Auditor General report of 2019. We have taken active steps to ensure that our education system is turned in the right direction. We have done a review of inclusive and special education that gets to the heart of so many of the issues that we have in our territory and what we are experiencing in our schools. I am proud that we have taken many steps with all of our partners to ensure that this work is actioned, unlike previous Auditor General reports that sat on the shelf and had no action — no meaningful action — put to them.

Just last Friday, we attended an education summit that brought together educators and partners throughout the territory to chart out the next steps in ensuring that we are addressing the core issues within our school system. We left that session feeling motivated, and I want to thank all of the educators throughout the Yukon Territory for the incredible work that they are doing to support our students and learning in the Yukon, and I am happy to rise at any time to speak about education in our territory.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: COVID-19 vaccination requirement rollout

Mr. Hassard: We've been hearing from businesses, NGOs, and employees of the Yukon government about the impacts of the Liberals' planned vaccine mandate. It has become clear to everyone that this announcement was made without any details or implementation plan. We also know that this is going to disproportionately impact rural communities.

Let's take the community of Ross River, for example. We understand that, with the implementation of the vaccine mandate, the community will be left with no local emergency medical services, so what is the government doing to ensure that Ross River has adequate EMS coverage beyond November 30?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am happy to talk about the supports that we are going to put in place in the face of the vaccine mandate that this government has put in place and supported, following many other jurisdictions in the country, to make sure that our civil servants and the people they serve are kept safe in the face of this ongoing pandemic.

Yes, we have heard that there could be some individuals who decide to not get vaccinated and who then would not be able to participate in emergency medical services on a volunteer basis in some of these communities. We have taken steps to address this. We are going to have extra cars placed in some locations so we can actually provide service to these communities. As far as Ross River goes, we put extra medevac services in place to ensure that the community has access to emergency medical services when required.

Mr. Hassard: Now, we know that the problems with this policy in Ross River aren't limited to EMS. There will also be considerable impacts to the school as well. The school is already short of teachers and has been without office administration staff for months. Now we will also be without any substitute teachers.

So, what is the government doing to ensure that the school can continue to functionally operate after November 30?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Well, it is becoming very clear on the floor of the Legislative Assembly today that the Official Opposition does not support the vaccine mandate. We know that. We are now getting concrete proof that this is the case. Perhaps they are trying to shore up support for the other conservative party that has now become available to voters in the territory.

Mr. Speaker, I will say this afternoon that, as far as the vaccine mandate goes, we are resolute in making sure that our civil servants and the other volunteers working for the Yukon government are vaccinated against COVID-19 to protect not only their fellow employees, but also the citizens of the territory whom they are serving, and we are going to make sure that we have the resources necessary.

We are all going to have to make sacrifices here. There could be staff shortages, and we will do our utmost to make sure that we continue to provide the services that Yukoners have come to depend on in the face of this vaccine mandate.

Mr. Hassard: Unfortunately, this isn't about the Official Opposition; this is about our communities in rural Yukon and about the safety and learning of those Yukoners. From my conversations with the First Nation and other members of the community, I understand that there will be an impact on home care as well. In fact, I have been told that there will be no one at all to provide home care services in the community of Ross River.

What is the government going to do to support those citizens in Ross River needing home care after November 30?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the approach by the opposition, but I think it's important that Yukoners know that the mandatory vaccine requirements here in the territory are one of the last to come in Canada. They are designed to protect Yukoners. They are designed to protect the public health and safety of Yukoners. We are working, and have always been working, following the advice of the acting chief medical officer of health and her recommendations now that mandatory vaccines have come into the Yukon to help limit the spread of COVID-19.

Mandatory vaccines will apply to all public servants, including teachers as well as those who work in hospitals, long-term care homes, medical clinics, and allied health care settings. That is the nature of the question before us now. I can indicate that we are working very closely with our partners and very closely with the communities that think that they might have difficulties and are attempting very carefully to make sure that there is appropriate coverage so that Yukon communities do not suffer through the choices of individuals. That vaccine mandate is critical to our health and safety.

Question re: COVID-19 rapid testing

Mr. Kent: We have asked the minister a number of questions about providing rapid tests for families with children in schools. The minister has explained that they are unwilling to do so. However, the numerous classroom closures that we have seen in Yukon schools are also affecting the teachers. The significant shortage of teachers and teachers on call has been exacerbated by losing teachers due to isolation requirements. This problem could be significantly reduced if rapid testing was made available for teachers.

So, will the government consider opening the eligibility for rapid testing at the COVID testing centre to teachers?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will start the answer and potentially pivot to my colleague for further answers. I will start with the challenges that we are experiencing with teachers on

call and just the overall issues that we have had since the beginning of the school year.

As I have said, effective teachers are one of the most important factors in student success at school, and we work to attract and retain the best educators that we can. Again, I have been meeting with all school councils across the territory. I am very well aware and have my hands on the pulse of what is really happening in our schools and some of the challenges that folks have. I want to assure folks that we are working directly with each school community on the challenges that they may face. Again, I want to thank the administrators, educators, and staff who are working hard for the benefit of our students and all Yukoners.

We certainly have had challenges with teachers on call and ensuring that we have the right amount of resources in our schools. We have, right now — and this may have changed —

Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Kent: I am not sure if the minister heard what the question was. I asked about rapid testing for teachers, and as a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, the acting chief medical officer of health told the Whitehorse Elementary School Council last night that, in fact, teachers are eligible for rapid testing. He advised that any teacher who has any symptoms and wants to get tested to go to the COVID testing centre here in Whitehorse, identify to the staff there that they are a teacher, and then they will be eligible for the rapid testing that is available there. The only problem is that it is not only the minister who didn't know, which is common for this minister, but neither did the teachers. As far as we can tell, there has been no communication with teachers that they are indeed eligible for rapid testing. As of noon today, yukon.ca made no mention of this.

So, what is the government doing to make teachers aware that, apparently, they are eligible for rapid tests?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It is clear that our Minister of Education is having a bit of difficulty hearing you through this process, so I'm happy to stand and take the opportunity to speak about a comprehensive testing strategy that we have here in the territory. It is also clear from the preamble to the question that the member opposite is aware of the answer to the question. It is very important that information was provided last night to parents and teachers through the Whitehorse Elementary School Council meeting. I can confirm that a comprehensive testing strategy will continue to be the foundation of our COVID-19 response as the pandemic evolves and changes almost on a daily basis.

We have indicated — I think I spoke about it yesterday and I know that the Minister of Education has recently — that rapid testing is available as recommended by the chief medical officer of health and their office. We will continue to abide by their recommendations to us. As noted last night to parents, it is available for teachers. I have spoken before about how rapid testing is in fact available when there is an outbreak to schools or to a class for the purpose of making sure that students are safe.

Mr. Kent: This is an extremely important policy decision that the government has made with respect to rapid testing. As I mentioned, the acting chief medical officer of

health told the Whitehorse Elementary School Council last night that in fact teachers are eligible for rapid testing. He advised any teacher to go to the COVID testing centre and they would be eligible to get a rapid test. As I mentioned, though, the only problem is that nobody knows about it. It is one of the best kept secrets in the Yukon. As far as we can tell, there has been no communication with teachers that they are eligible for rapid testing.

I will ask again: What is the government doing to make teachers aware that, apparently, they are eligible for rapid testing? As I said, yukon.ca makes no mention of this. I have not seen a press release, a Facebook graphic, or anything. What is the government doing to communicate this to our teachers?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We have been on our feet here in the Legislative Assembly a few times now saying that there is rapid testing available to all Yukoners. The way that the Yukon government uses that rapid testing is based on the recommendations from the chief medical officer of health.

I am going to say on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, without being there last night to hear what the acting chief medical officer of health said, that I would definitely agree that the best source of how we are doing with testing would come out of that office. I am glad to hear the opposition now finally agreeing with the chief medical officer of health, because we know that they pick and choose when they decide —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Order, please. The member has the floor.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

We know that the opposition picks and chooses when they decide that they are going to take those recommendations or not.

To clarify once again, as we have in the past, we do use rapid testing. The way that we use rapid testing is based upon the advice and recommendations from the chief medical officer of health. We try to make sure that we reduce the number of asymptomatic tests, and we also make sure that we use rapid testing to identify clusters and outbreaks — again, all from the recommendations of the chief medical officer.

Question re: Domestic violence support for women

Ms. Blake: The pandemic has seen domestic violence rates skyrocket. From mental health to housing costs, these added challenges can be dangerous to people facing domestic violence.

Across the Yukon, it's women's organizations that respond. They have been helping women and children in vulnerable situations for decades, but women's organizations are struggling too. Even before the pandemic, these essential workers have been chronically underfunded. The minister knows this. She has been told this over and over again directly by women's organizations, and the minister has done nothing.

Will the minister finally listen and increase core funding for women's organizations across the territory?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you very much for the question and for raising this in the House. I absolutely hold up all of the work that our women's organizations do on behalf of Yukoners

each and every day and all equality-seeking groups in the territory.

I am aware that there are requests for women's organizations to increase their funding. I have worked alongside them in the recent months to meet and understand the issues and challenges that they may have, and I will continue to do that, as the minister responsible for women and gender equity. I have been committed to ending violence against women particularly for decades, and I will continue to work with our incredible organizations. I believe that the Minister of Health and Social Services can also elaborate on this answer in terms of funding that is being provided through her department. As well, I know that our department provides some of that funding to those organizations.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, I have heard from many women and women's shelter workers about major issues with the Yukon Housing Corporation wait-lists. When women reach the top of the list, they get to see the unit that they have been given beforehand. Sometimes that unit doesn't work for the size of their family or for their safety. Women's organizations have said that some women who turn down a unit get to keep their spot on the wait-list while others are kicked off of the list altogether. It is unfair and seems like random discrimination. This is not keeping women safe.

Can the minister explain why some women are kicked off of the list while others are allowed to keep their spot on the Yukon Housing Corporation wait-list?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, to be fair to the people at Yukon Housing Corporation who work extremely hard, especially under the pressures that we have right now with a very large wait-list, I would say, look, until we can ground-truth all of those accusations that were just made — I think those were pretty strong words that were shared in the House. From my understanding — and we do get individuals who reach out to my office, and we then refer those to Yukon Housing Corporation — my experience has been that women fleeing violence — if we do find an appropriate housing option, we do give folks an opportunity to see that. It doesn't always work and, in some cases, we are in a position where we are going to under-house, but we think that, in many cases, it is better than being in a hotel room or another option.

I have not heard that people are kicked off of the list because they didn't accept a unit. We have certainly worked with individuals who want to be closer to grandparents or other supports, and we have worked through that. But again, I have not heard this — those are pretty strong accusations in the House today — not to say that maybe there isn't a case of this. You can always send folks to my office, but I will also respectfully investigate this with the president of the Yukon Housing Corporation.

But, again, that's not the way people operate at that corporation. They are there trying to help folks every single day.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, it's not just housing that women are struggling with. Across the Yukon, transportation is a huge barrier. When a woman tries to leave a domestic violence situation, she often has no options to turn to. Finding

a safe way to travel from a community to a shelter in Whitehorse is almost impossible. There are no public buses between communities, and many women don't have access to a car. Taxis are unreliable, extremely expensive, and often unsafe. We have been told this repeatedly by women's organizations.

Women facing domestic violence who live in communities are not getting the help that they need to leave. They are stuck in place.

Can the minister tell us what she expects women in communities without women's shelters to do when they need to travel to safety?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. It gives me an opportunity to speak on the floor of the Legislative Assembly about the very important services of Victim Services here in the territory. Victims of domestic violence — in fact, any violence across the Yukon — can access supports through Victim Services, transition homes, the RCMP, and other support agencies. Support can be accessed 24/7 from the transition homes in Dawson, Watson Lake, and Whitehorse and no matter where you are in the territory. These services are confidential and operated by trained staff who can support victims to navigate their safety along with that of their children and access to other services, including transportation if necessary. Victim Services can assist with safety planning, exploration of options, assistance to report to police, and access to other support services. These services are confidential and voluntary.

Victim Services is led by the victims. Victims of domestic violence may, in addition to what I have noted today, access legal advice through the independent legal advice program at Victim Services. Victim Services is there for one purpose and one purpose only, and that is to help victims in this territory.

Question re: Pedestrian-activated street lights in Watson Lake

Ms. McLeod: Earlier this year, the Yukon Legislative Assembly unanimously passed a motion that I put forward that urged the Minister of Highways and Public Works to install pedestrian-activated flashing lights at two crosswalks in my community of Watson Lake. The minister himself voted for it and, as I said, it passed unanimously. But in the legislative return dated October 21, the minister said — and I quote: "Based on engineering standards no new pedestrian lights are required at this time." Then yesterday in Committee, the minister said — and I will quote again: "... we are engaging with the community and we are in the process of initiating upgrades."

So, my question is simple: Is Watson Lake getting these pedestrian-activated street lights or not?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Yes, coming back to the comments I made yesterday in Committee of the Whole, I can confirm that my advice is that — my department officials met with the Town of Watson Lake and they intended to meet with the RCMP and the Liard First Nation with respect to their priorities with respect to upgrades of the road infrastructure in and around

Watson Lake. I also met with the Town of Watson Lake within the last 10 days or so and received their input as well.

Yes, this is the process — to answer the member opposite's question — this is the process of consulting and initiating the upgrades.

The member opposite will have heard yesterday that, during the course of the summer, the department repainted the Watson Lake crosswalks to ensure that they were clearly visible to motorists. As well, the department met with ATCO, as part of a review of Watson Lake's overall lighting infrastructure. The department will be working with ATCO to further enhance street lighting on the Alaska Highway.

Ms. McLeod: So, we just want to make sure that we have this right. In the spring, the minister voted for my motion and the Legislative Assembly passed this motion. Then, in October, the minister wrote a legislative return saying that no new pedestrian lights are required at this time. Then, yesterday, the minister said that he was in the process of initiating the upgrades that he committed to in the motion.

My community would very much appreciate a clear answer on the record today as to when we might see this in future budgets.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The Department of Highways and Public Works makes decisions on pedestrian safety based on a number of factors, including the criteria outlined in the Yukon street-lighting guidelines. Some of the considering factors are: traffic volume, roadway complexity, pedestrian volume, and collision history.

As the member opposite indicated, the preliminary assessment from the department assessed the need for pedestrian-activated crosswalks for this summer. Based on the engineering standards and the factors that I have outlined above with respect to traffic volume, roadway complexity, pedestrian volume, and collision history, the preliminary decision was that no pedestrian lights were required at the time.

However, we have had these ongoing meetings — as recently as yesterday — with the RCMP, with the Liard First Nation, and with the Town of Watson Lake council — and I met with them also within the last seven to 10 days — and we will receive feedback to confirm what the priorities are for Watson Lake.

Ms. McLeod: Quite frankly, that response was anything but clear. Watson Lake is looking for a clear answer on this. The minister voted for my motion this spring and it passed the House.

I know that the Liberals — especially the Deputy Premier — are developing a tendency to ignore motions in this House, but the least the minister can do today is provide a clear answer. When can the citizens of Watson Lake expect the minister to make good on his commitment when he voted for my motion this spring? When will Watson Lake get the pedestrian-activated crosswalks that the Liberals promised them?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I would just repeat that the upgrade work has been initiated, the consultation has taken place, and some substantive work has also been engaged in this summer — specifically that the Watson Lake crosswalks were repainted to ensure that they were clearly visible to motorists.

The member opposite will know that the highway infrastructure in the entire Yukon is built to a certain standard; however — as I said — based on the new and ongoing consultation with the relevant stakeholders in the Town of Watson Lake, I will receive that information and make an assessment based on the receipt of that information. The safety of all Watson Lake residents is of paramount importance to this government and we will follow the science and the standards that are set out in the Yukon street-lighting guideline protocols.

Question re: Financial support for parent caregivers of children with disabilities

Mr. Hassard: On October 21 of this year, the Minister of Health and Social Services responded to a petition asking that the government expand the scope of children's disability services to include equal financial support for parents who are full-time caregivers to a child or children with a disability. In her response, the minister said — and I quote: “We recognize the need for equitable inclusion of parents as full-time caregivers and programs that support families with children who live with disabilities. Parents must be central to the scope of options available to them.”

Can the minister update the House as to if the government has expanded the scope of financial support for those who are full-time caregivers to a child or children with a disability?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. It was an important day — when we debated that particular motion, I know that family members were present. I can indicate that, following the debate on that motion and the acceptance of that motion, information was provided to the Department of Health and Social Services to expand those services to indicate that families caring for their children could be included in that requirement. That program is an important one for Yukon families here in the territory, including the opportunity for caregivers and respite caregivers to be compensated for caring for individuals who require it due to disabilities here — and families. I don't have an update, other than to appreciate the quote given by the member opposite about exactly what was said here in the Legislative Assembly. I stand by that commitment and I can determine where the department is with respect to the expansion of that program.

Mr. Hassard: The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin tabled the petition on May 31, 2021. That's just over five months ago. Mr. Speaker, we certainly were hoping that, during those five months, the government would have made progress on developing solutions to address the financial hardships that families are facing.

In her response, the minister highlighted that this request is identified in *Putting People First*. Given the rising cost of living and the financial impacts experienced by many Yukoners due to COVID, any actions that can be taken to reduce financial burdens on Yukoners should be prioritized.

After the petition was tabled during the Spring Sitting, can the minister tell this House what direction she gave to her department to assist the financial challenges faced by parents who are full-time caregivers to a child or children with a disability?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It is my pleasure to be able to address this, as the member opposite has some of the implementation with respect to *Putting People First*. I think I have answered his second question in my first response. The commitment was made.

The quote was put into the record, into Hansard, again. I stand by that quote and that commitment and will determine where — remembering that the Department of Health and Social Services is, on a daily basis, dealing with a COVID-19 world pandemic and, in effect, a now-state of emergency. That does not, in any way, diminish the other work that the Health and Social Services department teams are doing to support Yukoners, but it is a reality that we are all facing.

The *Putting People First* report is a commitment that our government has made to the 76 recommendations in that report, and that has been formed through the mandate of an implementation committee to oversee the report and report twice annually on the progress. We are working on an implementation framework so that Yukoners can see how we are moving forward with the implementation of that important health initiative.

Mr. Hassard: It is positive to hear that department officials are working on a solution but, as I said, it has been five months since this petition was tabled and the rising cost of living in our territory is making it more difficult for families to make ends meet.

Can the minister commit to a timeline on this, and can the minister tell this House and Yukon parents who are full-time caregivers to a child or children with a disability on what date those additional financial supports will be available?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to restate that my quote with respect to when this motion was debated is an important one. This initiative has been adopted by the Department of Health and Social Services and the financial support for the families should be and will be available as soon as possible.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Motion re appearance of witnesses**Committee of the Whole Motion No. 2**

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. until 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, November 16, 2021, Al Lucier, chair of the Yukon Hospital Corporation Board of Trustees, and Jason Bilsky, chief executive officer of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions related to the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. until 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, November 16, 2021, Al Lucier, chair of the Yukon Hospital Corporation Board of Trustees, and Jason Bilsky, chief executive officer of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions related to the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

Committee of the Whole Motion No. 2 agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Deputy Chair: Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 202: Second Appropriation Act 2021-22 — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Health and Social Services

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you, Deputy Chair. With your permission, I will be standing for part of the address. I'm certainly not disrespectful to you when you are speaking. I will do my best to be up and down, but standing is a little bit easier — if I'm up. I will say it that way.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to address the Legislative Assembly today. I am here to speak about the supplementary budget for Health and Social Services for 2021-22. Before I begin, I would like to introduce the department folks who are here with me today. I am joined by Stephen Samis, who is the Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services, and Karen Chan, the assistant deputy minister of Corporate Services within the department. I thank them both for being here today and for the opportunity to have them with me. They, along with the entire department, have been

instrumental in ensuring that we have a budget here that supports all Yukoners. I want to thank them for their dedication and hard work in getting us to this part of the process.

In this budget, we are requesting a supplemental appropriation of \$22,764,000. This represents a 4.6-percent increase in the overall Health and Social Services budget. This additional funding is required not only for our pandemic response and our ongoing health system transformation, it is also needed for the legislated and required services that we provide to all Yukoners through the Department of Health and Social Services.

Approval of this funding will allow the Department of Health and Social Services to continue to provide essential health and social programs to Yukoners while continuing our response to the pandemic. As we all know, COVID-19 continues to have significant impacts on all Canadians and on all Yukoners. This has been a truly unprecedented time. I appreciate that this word has perhaps, on occasions prior to the last 20 months, been overused. I don't know that we can overuse it in the circumstances that we have all faced since the beginning of 2020.

Since the pandemic began in early 2020, keeping Yukoners safe has been our top priority. While we had cases starting in April 2020, the first significant wave of COVID-19 and a gamma variant hit the Yukon in June of this year, 2021.

We are now experiencing our second wave, and this one is fuelled by the delta variant. This is our most serious wave yet. Last week, the Yukon was seeing the highest COVID-19 infection rates of any jurisdiction in the country. I think that it's incredibly important that this sets the context for our conversations going forward with respect to this supplemental budget, but also with respect to all of the questions that we are faced with in this Legislative Assembly — members on both sides of the House — in trying to protect Yukoners. It is all of our responsibility to do so.

We currently have 164 active cases in the territory as of November 15. Actually, that number was probably adjusted this morning, so as of November 16, 2021.

Clearly, we need to take action to flatten this curve and to protect the health of Yukoners. On November 8, the Government of Yukon declared a state of emergency to allow for new temporary measures aimed at rapidly decreasing the transmission of COVID-19 and ensuring that the territory's health care capacity is not overwhelmed.

Ministerial orders under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* came into effect on November 13, just two days ago. It is our hope that together these measures act as a circuit breaker that will greatly reduce our infection rates. As always, our pandemic response is guided by the advice of the acting chief medical officer of health. Our response is also guided by *Forging Ahead: The Yukon's Continuing Response to COVID-19*. The goals of this guiding document are to protect vulnerable populations and enhance the well-being of Yukoners. These goals are supported by six pillars that guide our ongoing response. These pillars are: supporting First Nation and community partnerships; vaccinations; testing and surveillance; surge capacity; social supports for vulnerable

people; and public health measures. Through the supplemental budget, we are asking for further resources to continue our efforts under each of these six pillars.

The total request for this supplemental budget for COVID-19 is \$10,674,000. This is in addition to the mains budget for COVID-19, which was \$14,299,000, for a total of \$24,973,000 to COVID response. The total recoveries related to COVID-19 identified in this supplementary budget are \$10,674,000. So, the total recoveries match the request in this supplementary budget. This is in addition to the mains budget of recoveries of \$5,534,000, for a total of \$16,208,000 in recoveries.

The proposed allocations related to the pillars for the supplemental budget are: \$1,500,000 for vaccinations; \$256,000 for social supports for vulnerable people; and \$8,918,000 for public health measures. Further to these efforts, we continue to support the Yukon Hospital Corporation's COVID-19-related financial needs. Within the COVID-19 allocation of \$24,973,000, the hospital allocation is \$4,363,000 for logistics, policy, infection control, screeners, emergency department, lab supports, and other efforts — all at the hospital.

In the months ahead, we must continue to provide a robust testing regime, vaccines for all who are eligible or want them, necessary social supports, and self-isolation options. Our territory-wide vaccination efforts continue to be our best defence. Evidence shows that raising our vaccination rates even by a single percentage point helps to reduce the risk of breakthrough cases for the fully vaccinated, as well as risk of community transmission. I continue to urge all Yukoners to get vaccinated. Every additional person who chooses to get a vaccination helps to protect us all. We are now providing booster vaccinations, and we expect to be providing vaccinations soon for children under 12.

For the Department of Health and Social Services, protecting and enhancing the well-being of Yukoners during a global pandemic has been both challenging and expensive, but thanks to the dedication and hard work of all of our front-line health and social support workers — from doctors and nurses to continuing care staff, personal support workers, mental wellness workers, NGOs, and cleaning staff — we have continued to offer the services and supports that our citizens rely upon.

Our vision of healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities continues even during the global pandemic. In addition to all of our efforts combatting this pandemic, which I will outline in a bit more detail, we have continued moving forward with *Putting People First — the final report of the comprehensive review of Yukon's health and social programs and services*.

While COVID-19 is testing our resilience, and I daresay our patience, we have accomplished a great deal and will continue to make progress.

For COVID-19 specifically, the department is requesting \$10,674,000. This includes a significant request of 87.3 FTEs, or full-time equivalents, to support our efforts. This is needed because, ultimately, this work is done by people, and we need people to continue with our response. It is the screeners, the nurses, the greeters, the social workers, the testers, the

immunizers, the rapid-response teams, and the public health experts across the territory who are keeping us safe.

Without the necessary health and social services professionals, we cannot meet the needs of Yukoners. Given the shortage of available human resources across the country, this is a challenge, but we will continue to work hard to attract and retain the required professionals.

These funds will be used in part to continue our ongoing efforts to provide the COVID-19 vaccine to all Yukoners who wish to receive it. We also expect that Health Canada will soon approve a vaccine for children between the ages of five and 11. We are ready to administer these vaccines when the time comes.

Funds will, of course, be used to support the acting chief medical officer of health in monitoring the environment, including assessing epidemiological models and providing recommendations to Yukoners, all of which are vital to combat this virus.

As mentioned, effective testing is also crucial to prevent community spread. We plan to continue operating the COVID-19 testing and assessment centre in Whitehorse, as well as our rapid-response teams in rural communities. In addition, we recently reopened our drive-through testing centre to support the current increased need. The human resources to meet these needs include nurse practitioners, nurses, administrative support, greeters, and cleaners.

Given the fact that influenza season is now upon us, vaccination is especially important at this time. Influenza and COVID-19 both cause serious respiratory illness. The combination of both diseases could be life-threatening, especially for vulnerable people. We are seeking funding to allow us to continue our COVID-19 vaccination clinics, which also administer flu shots here in Whitehorse. Community nursing will continue to hold COVID-19 vaccination clinics in communities across the territory. Funding will support the hiring of auxiliary-on-call nurses, greeters, cleaners, and administration staff to support these clinics. I would like to add here that we are so appreciative of our pharmacists who have offered — and will continue to offer — flu vaccines throughout the territory.

As I mentioned earlier, supports for vulnerable populations are a key pillar of our response. Our vulnerable populations include Yukoners living in our continuing care homes, people living with disabilities, those on social assistance, or those who are precariously housed or homeless. Due to the size of this population and the number of 24/7 facilities that the department manages, some of our additional funding continues to be spent on cleaning and screening to ensure that we comply with best practices and the recommended guidelines from the office of the acting chief medical officer of health.

Continuing Care has approximately 300 long-term care beds and more than 700 home care clients across the territory. The Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and its guests also continue to be greatly affected by the pandemic. We are mitigating the transmission among this vulnerable population through enhanced cleaning and infection control measures and the implementation of social distancing measures. For example, the

department continues to contract with local hotels to house clients who are unable to be accommodated at the shelter due to the physical distancing requirements.

In addition to responding to COVID-19, there is also an additional \$1,280,000 for social services supports. This includes \$650,000 for Connective, formerly known as the John Howard Society Pacific, to operate the Housing First residence on Wood Street. This residence provides housing for people who are experiencing homelessness and who may require support due to mental health or substance-use challenges.

Additionally, there are funds to meet increased demand for the Yukon seniors income supplement. It also includes funding for increases in individual respite agreements and for two additional full-time disability service social workers as a result of increased caseloads.

The pandemic has also had an impact on Canada's other ongoing public health crisis: opioid poisonings and deaths. As we all know, the Yukon has felt the impact of this other pandemic. Since 2016, there have been 47 deaths related to opioids, of which 33 deaths included fentanyl. This supplemental budget includes 3.5 full-time equivalents, or FTEs, and operational funds for the Whitehorse supervised consumption site, which has been open since September 29 of this year. This new initiative is about harm reduction, and we are confident that it will save lives.

To get our much-anticipated midwifery program up and running, we are seeking approximately \$672,000. This includes funding for equipment and the funds to hire two midwives and part-time support staff. This supplemental budget request includes significant funding that is recoverable from the Government of Canada. This is important information for Yukoners. For example, there is a \$2,438,000 adjustment to carry forward funds from the territorial health investment fund that was not spent last year. These funds support innovation and transformation, including implementing *Putting People First* initiatives, and are 100-percent recoverable from the Government of Canada.

There is also \$3,769,000 for IHealth, Yukon's new electronic health information system. Once fully implemented, the integrated health information system will connect health care settings across the Yukon. This will increase access to care and improve the delivery and coordination of care for Yukon patients. Of that amount, more than \$2,310,000 is fully recoverable from Canada Health Infoway. There is also a proposed increase of \$1,300,000 to support cultural events and activities for First Nation children in out-of-home care and cultural programming for their families. Of this proposed increase, \$1,200,000 is recoverable through Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada.

A significant component to our ask today is the addition of 97.8 FTEs, or full-time equivalents. The majority of these — 87.3 — are part of our COVID efforts; the remainder support our essential health and social services programs. I truly understand that this is a significant increase, but it is important to note that we cannot deliver services and supports to Yukoners without the people to do this work to provide these services. COVID-19 testing, vaccinating, rapid response,

screening, contact tracing, and support for Yukoners who are vulnerable all require our most precious commodity: human resources.

I want to note that the COVID-19 FTEs — or full-time equivalents — are all temporary at this time, as the department assesses the need for resources to manage the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

In conclusion, Deputy Chair, I would like to recognize that while we have a large budget, we spend our funds judiciously and are accountable to Yukoners and are always mindful that we are spending taxpayers' dollars to provide them service. I would like to thank all members of the public service who serve Yukoners through the Department of Health and Social Services with confidence and compassion. Everything that we do within the Department of Health and Social Services is done to maintain and improve the well-being of Yukoners.

I will be pleased to answer questions about this important work that is currently underway and the information that is contained in the supplementary budget for 2021-22. I appreciate the opportunity to address the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Cathers: In rising to speak to this budget request as the Official Opposition critic for Health and Social Services, I do have questions about a number of areas, including the government's response to the pandemic. Because of the time we are at today, I am sure I am not going to get to most of my questions. I do want to begin by thanking people who are working hard in the pandemic response in the territory — whichever department or corporation they work for — as well as doctors and others who do not work directly for the government.

Before going into questions about the pandemic, I do want to begin with another important issue, which is Yukoners who do not have a family doctor. Thousands of Yukoners don't have a family doctor now. The minister herself has confirmed in the House this fall that 21 percent of Yukoners don't have a family doctor. The Liberal government at times seems interested in phasing out family medicine instead of recruiting doctors. They cancelled the position that was in charge of physician recruitment. We have called for them to reinstate it, but no action has been taken.

In contrast, the government — this year alone — in the minister's Department of Health and Social Services, has added 169.8 full-time equivalent positions. The minister just told us that she was adding 97.8 this fall. That is on top of the 72 that the minister told us that they were adding in the spring — which, for your reference, is found in Hansard on page 242 from May 26, 2021. They found the resources to add almost 170 new positions, but not one to help attract family doctors to the Yukon.

The website that used to be for physician recruitment has now been watered down to a generic health care page, with the first mention of physicians way down on the page after nurse practitioners, medical office assistants, and health care managers. In contrast to those positions that I just cited — as I'm looking at the website right now — on every one of them, they are highlighted and there's a link to click for more information. It is not until well down the page that there is any

mention of physicians. Nowhere is there anywhere to click for information.

So, it doesn't seem that this Liberal government is even going so far as to phone it in on physician recruitment. We see no evidence that they are doing more than paying lip service to this very important issue that is affecting over one fifth of Yukoners. So, on the issue of the physician recruitment position — I begin with a question for the minister about that part: Will they reinstate that position?

She found the resources to add just under 170 new other positions this year, but we see no action on this important role. The minister has talked a good line in claiming that they are collaborating and recruiting, but we have yet to see evidence of that. Can the minister provide any evidence of what — if anything — the government has done to continue physician recruitment at conventions, graduations, et cetera and to actually make a serious concerted effort to recruit family doctors to move to the Yukon and stay here?

Stepping back to when I was Minister of Health and Social Services — when I took on that role, we had a shortage of family physicians and we worked with the Yukon Medical Association as well as with the Yukon Registered Nurses Association and other stakeholders to establish the health human resources strategy that was intended to increase our access to family physicians and other health professions, and it was effective in doing that. It had several components, including the family physician incentive program for new graduates to recruit recently graduated family physicians who had graduated from a Canadian university to the Yukon by providing financial incentives in return for a five-year commitment to live in the territory and provide services.

Now, in checking out the Yukon Medical Association's website, there is mention of that program — though it's under a different name, it's the same program — but on the government website, nothing is easily found. I gave the example of the page that used to be yukonmd.ca that has been watered down to a generic health care page that buries any mention of physicians. In looking for information about the family physician incentive program on the government's website, nothing was easy to find. If that information is there, it is certainly well-buried. On yukon.ca — as if I were someone interested in moving to the territory — I tried searching for words such as “physician recruitment” and “physician incentives”, but the results that came up said nothing about it. Unless it's very well-buried in the list of unrelated pages that came up, the information does not seem to be there.

So, my question to the minister is: Is that program still in effect?

Does she even know? What about the preceptor support program? If those programs are available, what is the current amount of the incentives? When were the last new applications? When did the government last provide someone with support under these programs?

If the government and the minister are actually trying to encourage family doctors to move here, step one is to actually encourage them and make it easy for them to find information about incentives as well as actively take action to go out to other

parts of Canada and try to encourage family physicians to move here, as the government used to do.

In 2006 when I was Minister of Health and Social Services, we established the medical education bursary, which assists Yukon students who are receiving education at a Canadian institution as a physician. Fifteen years ago, when we launched it, the program provided \$10,000 per year per student in supports. In 2012, I believe it was, we increased that program to \$15,000. Now, according to the government's website this morning, we see that it has been cut to just \$5,000 per year, which is half of what it was 15 years ago. It is capped at providing support for just four years of medical school and a maximum amount, per Yukon student, of \$20,000, and it's capped at four students per year. That doesn't make sense. If family physician recruitment and training Yukoners in health professions is a priority, spending just \$20,000 per year on medical education bursaries, when over one-fifth of Yukoners don't have a family doctor — well, the minister and this government have their priorities wrong.

The Minister of Health and Social Services' department has a budget of almost half a billion dollars. In comparison, just \$20,000 a year — a maximum of \$20,000 a year — is being spent on assisting Yukoners who are trying to become trained as doctors. That doesn't make sense.

I would urge the minister, when she rises, to commit to increasing these bursaries, as well as to working with the Yukon Medical Association to look at what incentives and bursaries should be in place to attract family physicians to move here and to keep them here, as well as encouraging Yukoners who want to become educated as doctors.

As I noted, at the very least, it's an obvious step in the right direction that this program should not provide just half the support it did to Yukoners becoming educated as a family physician 15 years ago. Costs have gone up across the board. That includes the cost of tuition and going to medical school. If the government is actually serious about increasing the number of family physicians in the Yukon — and certainly one-fifth of Yukoners would like to see the government doing more to get family physicians here because they don't have one.

The government has significantly increased the resources for the department. I apologize that I misspoke earlier. I said that the minister's department has almost half a billion dollars. In fact, with the increases in this supplementary budget, the resources for the Department of Health and Social Services are over half a billion dollars, yet they are spending a measly \$20,000 on the medical education bursary program. Any of the other supports that may be there for government are certainly not well advertised. As another step, in addition to re-establishing the family physician recruitment position, the government could actually start taking action to promote the fact that we want family doctors to move here to the territory.

Switching gears, I would like to talk about immunization. We appreciate that people are working hard on the COVID immunization program. We are pleased that the government did take the step, as we called for, in providing third shots for COVID vaccinations — the booster shots — to Yukoners, which are now available for people aged 50 and up. We have

called for them and, again, I would reiterate the call to do as some other provinces such as British Columbia have done and announce the dates for when those shots will be available to Yukoners aged 18 and up. Health Canada, as the minister should know, has approved the use for ages 18 and up.

I do appreciate that staff are working very hard on the COVID immunization program and that there is only so much that they can do, but we are concerned that the government has suspended other important immunizations because of this reallocation of resources. Multiple parents and grandparents have contacted us with concerns about the suspension of childhood vaccinations. We have also heard from adults unable to get shots such as tetanus. Travel vaccinations are also impacted. In one case, while the information being provided to others may vary, I heard from one Yukoner who was told that the childhood vaccinations that were necessary would not be made available until January. That is concerning for parents.

There is a solution. We have heard from pharmacies that there is an interest in providing more of these vaccinations, including travel vaccinations.

We appreciate that the pharmacies are right now offering flu vaccinations and, of course, doing so quite well. So, why isn't the government working with pharmacies to have them step in while the government's resources are tied up, dealing with COVID vaccinations, and have pharmacies start making childhood vaccinations and travel vaccinations available to Yukoners? Again, recognizing that pharmacies are private businesses and might choose not to do so, but based on our conversations with them, they have indicated an interest in the travel immunizations in particular. I would anticipate that, if the government were to approach them about childhood immunizations, they would very likely also be willing to take up the slack in that area and provide this important service.

So, again, to the staff who are doing this service, I want to make it clear that we are certainly not criticizing them. We recognize that some of them are working flat out right now, but I am criticizing the decision by the minister and the government not to do more in this area. The suspension of these other immunization programs for children, as well as for travel and adult vaccinations for important shots such as tetanus, is a serious issue, and we would like to see the government actually do more in this area and work with pharmacies to make these shots available.

Will the minister agree to do that?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am pleased to be able to stand to speak about the topics introduced by the member opposite.

First of all, before I speak about the physician recruitment and retention plans and the work that is underway, I would like to say that our government considers the priority of recruitment of nurses and nurse practitioners and all health care professionals — but in particular nurses, nurse practitioners, and physicians — all to be of paramount importance.

I can address the concept of a physician recruitment position in particular as noted by the member opposite. I should be clear that the position was not cancelled. The person left the position quite abruptly and with not much notice.

As a result, an assessment has been ongoing with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Medical Association and other physicians about whether or not that physician recruitment position and re-staffing that position is the most effective way of moving forward with respect to the important issue of recruiting physicians here in the territory and retaining them once they are here.

We are working with the Yukon Medical Association on that topic. I should note that, of course, just at about that time when the person left that position, it was the beginning of the pandemic. Again, it's not noted as an excuse but as a reality in what have been shifting priorities and opportunities here in the territory when we are focused on keeping Yukoners safe.

For the past 20 months, for an example, one of the things that was noted by the member opposite is about going to conventions and trying to recruit doctors, nurses, and nurse practitioners through that process. Of course, for the most part, nobody has been going to conferences in the last 20 months. The ability to recruit and retain physicians, nurses, and nurse practitioners needs to be adjusted, quite frankly. We are working with our partners here, including the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Medical Association, to make sure that the opportunities and the road that we go down will be the most effective in order to retain physicians.

We have provided financial funds to the Yukon Medical Association, and they reimburse for a variety of physician recruitment and relocation supports. That's an important factor in having doctors come here.

I'm going to get some additional information if it's at all possible. I will speak about the bursary in a moment.

I want to note that family physicians here in the territory recognize this also to be an important opportunity and an important priority for them. They work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to provide physician support and physician authorities to operate here in the territory.

I have had many conversations with family physicians here in the territory, seeking their advice for solutions. I know that we can work together to make sure that those solutions are effective and we are working to determine how we can work together to provide further services to Yukoners.

I don't want to get into the details of the math, but the member opposite has noted that 72 FTEs were in the spring mains budget with respect to responding to COVID, and 87 are noted here. Certainly, some of those positions will be the same positions because they were temporary and these ones are temporary. So, without getting into adding the two numbers together, I can assure Yukoners that some of those positions will in fact be the same.

The *Putting People First* report, as noted, indicated that approximately 21 percent of Yukoners do not have access to a family physician. Our government is aware of some local physicians — one in particular — having closed their primary care practice and the importance of that role — that place for Yukoners to get service and the effect that this has on the rest of the practitioners.

The pandemic has significantly impacted our ability to recruit nurses, physicians, and other care providers and there is

currently a national and global shortage of health care workers. I will say that it is different, perhaps, from the one faced by the member opposite back in 2006, but we have continued to recruit through national and online forums and supplemented staff with agency nurses and out-of-territory resources. We certainly don't want to continue that indefinitely, and nor do the nurses, the nurse practitioners, and the physicians. They want to explore their options here in the north; they want to be able to come to work here and provide a life here for themselves.

In 2019, we started a "find a doctor" program and since that time have matched 1,048 Yukoners with a physician through that program. We have expanded access to virtual care alternatives and continue to explore those, to happen in the very near future. We have increased the number of resident pediatricians, psychiatrists, and surgeons.

As we implement *Putting People First*, we are working to hire additional nurse practitioners and we are meeting with the Yukon Medical Association to address that issue, as well as physician recruitment and retention.

We are also moving forward with the creation of a bilingual health centre, which will be open in early 2022. This primary health care setting in Whitehorse is expected to reduce some of the issues and pressures on the primary health care system.

I think that it is important to note that, according to the Canadian Institute for Health Information and the National Physician Database in Canada, there is an average of 173 resident physicians per 100,000 people in the fiscal year 2019-20. Comparatively, in the Yukon, we have 221 resident physicians per 100,000 people during that 2019-20 fiscal year. Of course, this is a statistic. We still know that about 2,000 Yukoners still do not have access to a primary health care physician. But there are — like all complex problems — a number of ways to address that. That is why I mentioned nurse practitioners and nursing, because there need to be additional ways of doing so. I will come to that in just a moment.

The Department of Health and Social Services has been exploring — in addition to the primary health care services that are provided across the territory, we have been exploring opportunities to contract nurse practitioners to serve some existing clinics. Additionally, work is underway to expand — as I said — our virtual physician services. The department has also been working to assess options for working with a professional recruiter — as I said earlier — to determine whether or not that is the best route for filling the physician recruitment position. Again, we will take advice from the medical professionals and those in the territory who can help us with that. That work is ongoing. This is a critical issue — individuals having primary health care and supporting our physicians, our nurses, and our nurse practitioners in the field are absolutely essential to providing good experiences, both for those professionals and for Yukoners.

I think I will stop there with respect to the response to that particular part of the question and move on to the issue of immunization.

As noted — with respect to the member opposite's question — the member opposite asked about childhood

vaccines, immunizations, travel, and tetanus. I think that there are a couple of important parts here to note. One is to note, certainly, the suggestion that we work with pharmacists to deliver some of these — that is in fact what's happening. Conversations are happening as we speak — well, perhaps not this afternoon, but as we speak — with pharmacists to determine their interest — as the member opposite noted, they are private businesses — but their interest in delivering some of these vaccines. They have certainly been supportive of delivering the flu vaccine and it has been an amazing partnership to do so. Pharmacists are not able to provide vaccines to children under the age of five, so some childhood vaccinations, of course, need to be delivered through the regular immunization programs. Right now, that is provided at the vaccination centre here in Whitehorse.

We have worked with the acting chief medical officer of health on a prioritization of vaccines and working with the pharmacists on what can be done with them — as I said, though, not for children under five. We did have to defer some childhood vaccines in the last number of months, but we are catching up when and where we can.

Tetanus shots are available in the emergency department if it is urgent for people when they are injured, or they can also be available by appointment at the Whitehorse Health Centre. The chief medical officer of health has given guidance on the delivery of vaccine services since early in the pandemic and vaccines have been prioritized based on that list. We are asking the acting chief medical officer of health to look at that list again now that we are entering — and they have been reviewing over the period of the pandemic, but we are asking for them to review it now to determine the priorities now as we go forward. Some vaccine requests have been available on request — like for someone who is travelling. Not that long ago, we had a case of someone who was moving out of the country and clearly needed to have certain vaccines to do that.

Sorry, I was talking about the CMOH providing their guidance, and we just had a new list delivered yesterday. I have not yet looked at it, but I'm happy to take a look at it and determine whether or not we could even table it here in the Legislative Assembly to provide that information to Yukoners.

I should also note that, in the category of individuals who require certain vaccines — and while they certainly haven't all been cancelled, there has been a prioritization — with the list from the acting chief medical officer of health and before that the chief medical officer of health — throughout the pandemic to determine what priorities could be given to those immunizations. We have been clearly making them available to people going on humanitarian efforts and those requiring special appointments for things like travel vaccines and — as I said — in the one case of someone moving away. We have been providing those through the vaccination clinic and Whitehorse Medical Services. I think I have noted this already — the CMOH has given guidance on prioritization of vaccines. I received the new list yesterday. I will review it with the department officials and the acting CMOH office and see if we can table it for individuals here in the House and also for the benefit of Yukoners.

Mr. Cathers: I would just note that — in the area of vaccinations — unless something has changed recently, appointments for vaccinations such as tetanus shots — actually, specifically tetanus shots — were not available by appointment at the Whitehorse Health Centre. I had a constituent who called and they were told that the program was not available because of the COVID response. For under the age of five, my understanding — from talking to health care professionals — is that it is possible for pharmacists to receive the appropriate training so that they can administer shots for children under the age of five. It was indicated to me that this is available through an online module. I would actually urge the minister to take a look at that.

I would note that — on the issue of physician recruitment — if you don't make physician recruitment a priority, Yukoners will continue to suffer the consequences. The government certainly does not seem to be trying very hard at all — and even the minister's remarks today seem to be pivoting to talking about nurses and nurse practitioners instead of recognizing the importance of recruiting family doctors. While those other professions are quite important of course, there is a need for family doctors. Over one fifth of Yukoners are without a family doctor.

I am going to move on to the area of hospital funding. As the minister knows, it has been chronically neglected under this Liberal government — including the fact that the Hospital Corporation literally entered a pandemic with the hospital being short millions of dollars of core funding for the 2019-20 fiscal year. That is not just me saying it — as the minister should know, the Hospital Corporation's own annual report for 2019-20 says it. On page 15 of that 2019-20 annual report, it shows that, for the fiscal year that ended as we were in a pandemic, the hospital was short \$3.9 million in funding. The hospital's 2020-21 annual report is now public and, once again, Deputy Chair, there is a multi-million-dollar deficit at the end of the year. I would encourage anyone who doubts that to look at the hospital's own annual report.

In their annual report for the fiscal year which ended in March of this year, we see that total expenses for the hospital are listed as \$103.6 million on pages 17 and 18 of the annual report, with revenue at only \$99.6 million. I am going to repeat that: \$103.6 million in actual expenses at the hospital and revenue of only \$99.6 million. That is another \$3.9-million funding shortfall for the hospital in another year that they were in a pandemic, and that is according to the hospital's own annual report — as well as, of course, reflected in their financial statements — both of which the minister herself tabled in the Legislative Assembly this fall. So, a \$3.9-million funding shortfall for the hospital — how does the minister consider this acceptable?

Last fall, one of the witnesses described the corporation's core budget as "approximately \$92 million". The transcript of that can be found in Hansard, November 19, 2020, on pages 1969 and 1970. According to the minister herself — this Sitting, on November 2 — she told us that there is \$85.761 million in the O&M budget for the hospital, in a supplementary budget. Deputy Chair, that is a \$6.2-million

drop from what the CEO of the Yukon Hospital Corporation described as the hospital's core budget last year when he appeared in this Assembly. We are in a pandemic. How does the minister consider this continued underfunding and continued neglect by this Liberal government for hospitals acceptable?

Again, the total expenses for the hospital in their annual report ending this March were \$103.6 million. They ended the year in the hole. This year, the minister is giving them only \$85.76 million in O&M. That is \$17.8 million less than their total actual expenses for last year. There is a bit of capital in that, but even comparing total funding in the supplementary to last year's actual, that is a \$10-million drop in hospital funding. How does the minister consider that acceptable?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I look forward to providing the information about the Yukon Hospital Corporation's consolidated financial statements. I actually spoke to this earlier and will take just a moment to find my notes with respect to that.

The Yukon Hospital Corporation is a priority with respect to the Yukon government and the funds that are provided for its operation are absolutely critical to the operation of health care here in the territory. It's the place that individuals who are missing primary health care opportunities often go, as we know. We work closely with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to make sure that they are — sorry, I can't find the note on that page in the speech I just gave here in the Legislature; perhaps one of my colleagues can locate it for me. I did make reference to the Yukon Hospital Corporation's financial situation. We work closely with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to ensure that their budget reflects their expected needs for the year.

We meet with the Yukon Hospital Corporation regularly to assess their funding needs. The Yukon Hospital Corporation shows a deficiency of revenues over expenses of \$4 million. This deficiency, or this deficit, is a consolidated value and is made up of non-cash actuarial pension adjustment and increase in vaccine liability due to COVID-19 travel restrictions and a two-year non-cash depreciation of capital asset adjustments.

I am pleased to be able to speak about this information here in the Legislative Assembly because this is our supplemental budget debate. The hospital follows the Canadian public sector accounting standards and the Auditor General of Canada, and their records are audited by the Auditor General of Canada. The audited financial statements also indicate that the hospital had over \$2 million in cash at the end of the year. The supplemental estimates, the ones that we are discussing here — in the first supplementary estimates for 2021-22, we are providing the Yukon Hospital Corporation with \$85.8 million to meet their expenses. The amount of \$85.8 million is the revised estimate for 2021-22, which includes \$206,000 in additional funding to cover interest payments on the letter of credit to meet the Yukon Hospital Corporation's pension solvency needs.

Between the 2021-22 mains and the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*, there is a total of \$4.4 million identified within the overall COVID-19 response budget for the Yukon Hospital Corporation. For the 2020-21 mains to the 2021-22 mains, there is an overall increase of five percent, or \$4.2 million, and this

includes an increase in core funding of four percent for growth and cost-of-living adjustments with respect to the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

I note the time, Deputy Chair, and I look forward to being able to continue giving information about the Yukon Hospital Corporation's funds, but I also note that we are about to have those individuals responsible for the Yukon Hospital Corporation here as witnesses. I look forward to the opportunity for individuals to ask them questions here in the Legislative Assembly. As such, I move that you report progress.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the member for Riverdale South that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Deputy Chair: Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 2 adopted earlier today, Committee of the Whole will receive witnesses from the Yukon Hospital Corporation. In order to allow the witnesses to take their places in the Chamber, the Committee will now recess and reconvene at 3:30 p.m.

Recess

Deputy Chair: Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Appearance of witnesses

Deputy Chair: Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 2 adopted on this day, Committee of the Whole will now receive witnesses from the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

I would ask all members to remember to refer their remarks through the Chair when addressing the witnesses. I would also like to ask the witnesses to refer their answers through the Chair when they are responding to members of the Committee. The Member for Riverdale South will introduce you as witnesses.

Witnesses introduced

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would like all of my colleagues to welcome this afternoon the witnesses whom we have to present to the Legislative Assembly. They are: Al Lucier, the chair of the Yukon Hospital Corporation Board of Trustees, and Jason Bilsky, who is the chief executive officer of the Yukon Hospital Corporation. I thank both of you for being here this afternoon, and I look forward to the questions by Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Deputy Chair: Would the witnesses like to make brief opening remarks?

Mr. Lucier: Thank you, Deputy Chair. I would like to thank you, the Hon. Minister McPhee, Members of the Legislative Assembly, and all Yukoners for the opportunity to speak on behalf of Yukon's hospitals today. I will take only a few minutes to highlight some of our recent priorities.

My name is Allan Lucier, as the minister has alluded to, and I am honoured to be the chair of the Yukon Hospital Corporation. With me today is Jason Bilsky, the chief executive officer of the corporation. It is a privilege to work and represent a dedicated team that delivers safe and excellent care to

Yukoners 24/7. Our hospital's board of trustees includes representatives from across the territory, including Yukon First Nations, medical staff, the public service, and the public at large. We support and oversee the hospitals' skilled and diverse team of nearly 700 employees, a medical team of 100 physicians, and dozens of volunteers. These teams provide the very best acute hospital care while also delivering critical health services, like imaging and lab tests.

They are proud to be partners and allies with everyone who works in our health system. They are also committed to ensuring that you have the best care that you need and a positive and healthy hospital experience. The past 20 months and the pressures of the pandemic have made it clear that close collaboration in the delivery of health care is more important now than ever before. We can't succeed without working collaboratively to ensure that Yukoners are well cared for in hospital, at home, or elsewhere in the territory. Physicians, governments, First Nations, and community agencies are all vital and valued partners in the shared duty and journey to care for Yukoners.

The past year is one of unprecedented challenge and change for our territory, our hospitals, and our way of life, and tragically, we are not without loss. All Yukoners have been impacted by the pandemic, and some of our most vulnerable communities were hardest hit as traditional ways to gather and access supports have been changed or limited. Pandemic pressures have also intensified our efforts to be prepared for the potential sudden increases for the need of our hospital services in the case of a serious outbreak.

Our teams have shown incredible dedication and resilience during this period, and we know that this has been especially difficult and stressful for our health care workers. Our teams have risen to the challenge. We continue to adopt our policies, protocols, and the communications that we use to keep everyone safe and informed. We will continue to take every necessary step to ensure the safety of the patients, the people, and our communities.

We have worked closely with community, government, and health system partners to make sure that we have the information and the critical supplies and equipment that we need to safely provide for every Yukoner who needs it. Unlike other parts of our country, our hospitals have avoided wide-scale shutdowns of services, procedures, or tests.

On a people front, as northern, remote hospitals, we sometimes struggle to recruit and retain skilled staff that we need to sustain hospital care. We are all aware of this.

While we have made some success in adding and recruiting staff, making sure that our hospitals have the right staffing in place requires ongoing effort each and every day. This is especially the case when we are focused on specialized and technical positions.

On a patient front, after several years of being overcapacity, the last two successive years have seen lower levels of occupancy in our hospitals. These results are in large part due to a more effective relationship with our government partners to better manage patient flow, ensuring that people are in the appropriate setting at the appropriate time.

During the last 18 months of pandemic, we have seen ebbs and flows in people seeking hospital care. This might be attributable to people avoiding or waiting to access care.

While we anticipate that patient volumes will return to, or exceed, their previous pace, I would like to remind all Yukoners that our hospitals remain safe places to access care.

Despite our unprecedented year, we have —

Deputy Chair's statement

Deputy Chair: Order, please. The time for opening remarks has now elapsed.

Before we begin questions, I would ask the witnesses to make sure that I call you before you start speaking. That is important for Hansard so they can keep an accurate record. Just get my attention and I will call your name. Also, please indicate when you are finished speaking so I can move on to the next person. It is trickier without the standing up and sitting down to indicate.

At this point, I will turn it over to the members for questions.

Mr. Cathers: Beginning my questions as the Official Opposition critic for Health and Social Services, I would like to begin by thanking Mr. Lucier and Mr. Bilsky for appearing here today. I would also like to acknowledge the former chair, Brian Gillen. I understand that the handover took place this summer. I would like to thank you gentlemen, as well as the board of trustees, for the work that you do on behalf of Yukoners. Please pass my thanks, as well, to the Yukon Hospital Corporation, the management team, as well as employees and medical staff for the work that all of you do to provide high quality hospital care and services to Yukoners when we need it.

Our health care system depends on the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and the work that you do is vitally important to the Yukon, and it was greatly emphasized during the pandemic as well. We know that meeting the health care needs of our territory is a challenge at the best of times, and the pandemic has placed substantial additional strain on hospitals. So too has the shortage of family physicians, as over 2,000 Yukoners are without a family doctor and have to rely on the emergency room when they need to see a physician.

The minister has told us that 21 percent of Yukoners don't have a family doctor, so my question for the witnesses is this: Of the visits to the emergency room by Yukoners within the last year, or the last number of months, are the witnesses able to tell us how many of those visits or what percentage of those visits could have been avoided if the patient had a family physician?

Mr. Bilsky: Let me start by saying that emergency department volumes have fluctuated due to the pandemic in 2019 and the year following. We saw a slight drop from an average of about 34,000 to 35,000 visits down to about 31,000 to 32,000 visits in 2020. Those volumes have since increased, closer to where they were the prior year.

This makes it difficult to judge or to assess the impact of the closure of the walk-in clinic. While the volumes have decreased with people selectively accessing the emergency

department, the emergency department has been challenged by acuity, ongoing COVID-19 challenges, staffing challenges due to a national nursing shortage, and changes in how they complete and document work through the IHealth going live. I must stress that any person who is feeling unwell and wishes to seek medical care should be able to seek care. In the absence of any other option, it is appropriate for those persons to be seen at the emergency department.

We estimate that roughly between five and 10 percent of emergency department visits could be supported in another care model. On average, the conditions best managed elsewhere over the last several months have been relatively stable — approximately four to five percent — although from July through to August, they rose approximately to six to eight percent. Again, those are patients who could better be seen elsewhere.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the answer. Last year, the CEO indicated that, during the pandemic, "... non-urgent medical imaging work wait times have suffered."

Could you please provide us with an update on those medical imaging wait times for non-urgent services, including what the current average wait time is for non-urgent medical imaging services by the main categories?

Mr. Bilsky: I think that it's important to say that impacts are continuously evolving due to COVID. Some are immediately apparent and some are not visible or are indirect.

We are continuing to ensure that all people have access to acute and ambulatory services when needed and in the safest way possible. We have been fairly fortunate to generally not have seen widespread shutdowns and have been able to maintain continuity of service, although patients have been impacted by COVID at Yukon hospitals. While most clinical areas continue to address any backlog that we have seen, there have been temporary deferrals of services in diagnostics and medical imaging.

I would like to say that resumption of — has been a dynamic process and is impacted by continuously addressing the current risk environment. I would like to say that most, if not all, medical imaging wait times — we have essentially established — or are meeting our current target wait times with the exception of the MRI. Reduction services saw a backlog in June and July.

This was compounded by the fact that we have only one permanent resource that operates the MRI. To supplement that, we have additional locum services that we use, but because of the pandemic and being over the summer, it has been very challenging to retain locum services. In doing so, it has been very difficult to maintain the wait times that we have.

In particular, with the MRI, the urgent wait times are being met. Semi-urgent wait times, which should be 30 days or less, are approximately 54 days, and we like to see non-urgent wait times at less than six months, but they are around an 18-month wait time.

We do have a plan in place to improve these wait times. It includes two things: One is continuing to look for temporary resources to address the backlog and, as well, planning for more

permanent resources to run extended service hours for the MRI on a more sustainable basis.

Mr. Lucier: I think that it is important to also recognize that imaging is one of those elements within our hospitals that continuously improves with technology. I think that three points need to be made with respect to that. There is a new A-arm that helps surgery teams better view, in more real time, clear images during more emergency situations within the surgery theatres that we have. The corporation has also added four new ultrasound machines and an additional ultrasound suite at the emergency department of Whitehorse General Hospital. This makes these exams more accessible for everyone and certainly more accessible to the emergency patients.

Finally, I think that it is important to acknowledge that, with the generosity of Run for Mom and the partnership with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, Whitehorse General Hospital has also acquired new mammography technology. This allows even earlier and more accurate detection of stage 1 breast cancer. I know that the member's question was about the wait times, but it is also about the quality and staying current with the technology.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the answers from both the witnesses. I do appreciate that new medical standards, as well as keeping pace with new technology, practice, and opportunities for improving both the equipment and the services — there is a major cost pressure, but also, of course, a good news story for Yukoners when those improvements can be made.

I would like to turn to the topic of funding. Last year, on the topic of funding, we heard from one of the witnesses that — and I quote: "... our hospitals must live within these constraints while still meeting significant growth pressures. I think that is where the challenge comes in, trying to meet the growth pressures on an ongoing basis." He then went on to note that "... each and every year, we do create what I would call a balanced budget, based on what we see as our allocation each and every year, going forward."

It was concerning to me that, in the annual report for the fiscal year ending March 2020-21, we see that the total expenses for the hospital are listed as \$103.6 million on pages 17 and 18 of the annual report, with revenue at only \$99.6 million. That certainly doesn't look like a balanced budget. It is a \$3.9-million funding shortfall and I am sure that this is causing a lot of internal pressures and challenges for hospital management.

So, I want to talk about some of those specific cost pressures. Last year, the witnesses outlined some of the major cost pressures and percentage increases in those areas — and I quote: "... in this past year, almost every ambulatory and inpatient service increased by greater than, say, three percent. Some of them are up to possibly 10 percent."

Can the witnesses please tell us about some of the significant cost pressures and increases in services that they saw, both in the last fiscal year as well as in the months of 2021? What are some of those notable cost drivers and what are some of the cost pressures that they will have to be dealing with in the remainder of the fiscal year?

Mr. Bilsky: First off, I would like to say that YHC continues to assess and work with government to live within the fiscal constraints — as we had stated last year — and we will continue to provide quality care. We continuously work with government on a number of fronts and discussions, taking a collaborative approach system-wide to health delivery. This includes how we and our health system partners can be better aligned and integrated to serve the health needs of Yukoners. This means identifying and addressing priorities and providing safe and excellent hospital care to all Yukoners, recognizing that our hospitals must live within our fiscal constraints, yet still meeting significant growth pressures.

To address the specific question about the deficit noted in the 2020-21 fiscal year — as correctly stated, the deficit of \$3.9 million is due to basically non-cash accounting entries. \$1.8 million was related to non-cash actuarial-determined pension adjustments, while another over \$1 million is an increase in employee-related costs due to COVID-19 travel restrictions — again non-cash — and, lastly, depreciation entry to capital assets.

Specifically about some of the pressures that we see — and I will generalize some of these pressures — pressures continue on employee expenses due to recruitment and retention challenges. I don't think that it's any surprise to anybody in Canada that health care human resources are significantly strained. Retention and recruitment challenges are ever-present.

We also see complexity in volume increases in outpatient services, such as lab and medical imaging.

In addition to that, impacts on costs and revenues of the global pandemic have been very significant, and we continue to address these with government. Lastly, capital funding for general maintenance and replacement are other areas where we continuously see pressures.

Having said all this — as I said earlier, it's a continual process to work with government to make sure we identify priorities and make sure these are funded adequately.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answer. Hospital Corporation total expenses — as the witnesses know — were \$103.6 million last fiscal year. While some of that is of course capital, the overwhelming majority is O&M. Last year, the cost of compensation and benefits alone went up by \$5.2 million, according to page 6 of the Yukon Hospital Corporation financials. Costs are on the rise; total funding for this fiscal year, on the other hand, is down. It is a combined total of \$93.46 million in the supplementary budget, of which only \$85.7 million is O&M funding. The minister confirmed those numbers during Question Period on November 2.

Last fall, when the witnesses appeared here in the Assembly, one of them described the corporation's core budget as "approximately \$92 million". The transcript of that answer is on pages 169 and 170. That is clearly substantially more than the \$85.7 million in the O&M budget now. That certainly looks like a problem to me.

Can the witnesses tell us whether they have received confirmation that the government will be providing them with millions of dollars in additional funding this year to correct the

shortfall, or is that something where discussions are ongoing or I would need to take that up with the minister herself?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I have no objections to the questions that are being presented today. I just want to comment that I don't think it's necessarily fair for members to ask these witnesses about something that might have been said — if it's a quote — to put that on the record — about what was said previously — is no issue, I think, but it's not fair to ask these witnesses to comment on something that was said previously. One of them was here and one of them wasn't, so I just want to be fair in that process.

Mr. Cathers: If I could just interject that, in quoting witnesses from last year — I am avoiding singling anyone out, but the witness who provided the answer last year is actually here today, so I don't think that it is an unfair question. I just would note that — as I did in my questions — if the witnesses can answer my question, that is appreciated. I am just concerned about that discrepancy between what was described in a core budget of approximately \$92 million last year and the numbers that I can see in the supplementary budget for this fall — and that the minister herself has confirmed — of \$85.761 million.

Mr. Bilsky: I am not sure if I can answer the question directly. I think it is something that we will have to continue to work on with government to address. What I can confirm is that the annual budget for fiscal year 2021-22 is \$98.2 million prior to factoring in COVID-19 impacts. This includes a three-percent increase in core funding, plus incremental funding for other increases in services and projects underway.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answer from the witness. In reply to questions that I asked last fall when the witnesses were here, this spring, the minister tabled a legislative return stating that employee costs at the Yukon Hospital Corporation had grown by 21.8 percent over a five-year period. That is over \$9 million or an average annual increase of over four percent per year. Can the witnesses please tell us how much the increase in employee costs over last year is expected to be for this fiscal year?

Mr. Bilsky: Employee expenses are expected to rise — sorry, I don't have the percentage, but it will equate to approximately 4.5 percent or \$2.9 million.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate that information.

In the annual report for the last fiscal year, it says that patient volumes for chemotherapy are up 28 percent. Can the witnesses please tell us what the cost increase is as a result of that 28-percent increase in chemotherapy and how much the total cost of chemotherapy has increased in the last year?

Mr. Bilsky: I'll start off by saying that cancer treatment in the Yukon has evolved significantly over the past five years, and I think that the comments being referred to are over several years. Cancer care is now provided by a collaborative care team consisting of general practitioner oncologists, chemo nurses, pharmacy support, and cancer care, and it is all guided by a program — BCCA, or BC Cancer Agency. The complexity of chemo treatment — it is correct. It has increased over the last decade with treatments, and these treatments have had the ability to target specific cells, have less toxic effects, and have

positive outcomes. These positive outcomes are earlier detection, better treatments, and longer life for treatments.

As was discussed, this complexity, earlier detection, and increased patient survival have resulted in a 26-percent increase in visits and the doubling of treatment cost to more than \$2 million per year, but that is from the period of 2015-16 until today, so basically over a six-year period.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the answer. I was just relying on what was indicated on the hospital's report, which referred to year over year increases in patient volumes, and it indicated that there was an increase in chemotherapy of 28 percent in patient volumes as well as the other areas, such as medical rehabilitation therapies — nine percent — and diabetes education clinic — 20 percent. I do appreciate the information provided about those costs as well.

I want to move on to the issues of wait times. We heard last year when hospital witnesses appeared that the wait time to see a cardiologist was about five months with 74 people on the list. Can the witnesses please indicate what the current wait time is for this cardiac care and how many people are currently on the list?

Mr. Bilsky: The current wait time for a cardiologist, according to our records, as of September 2021, is approximately six months. I apologize that I don't have the total number of patients waiting for that at this point.

Mr. Cathers: If the witnesses would be able to provide that later, it would be much appreciated since it is an ongoing concern.

There were previously issues with spirometry not being available locally. I know that, in the past, this has been provided, if memory serves, at one point by the hospital and at one point by a private contractor. There was a gap in service, which I believe we discussed last fall when the witnesses appeared. Can the witnesses please indicate what the current status of that program is? If it is being provided, who is providing that service?

Mr. Bilsky: Spirometry is a program that hasn't been provided through the hospital system for a number of years. The issue with spirometry in the hospital setting is the ability to maintain the level of competency necessary for spirometry testing.

I could be corrected on this, but I believe that there is a contract now with an outside party. The contract between government and the outside party provides spirometry services.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the answer. We will raise that issue with the minister if that's something that the hospital is not providing itself.

I want to move on to another issue of wait times — cataract wait times. Those have been an issue, as the witnesses know, and one that, as members of the House will recall, we had pressed the government to address a few years ago. We are pleased that there were steps taken to address the wait times and provide that service in a more timely manner to Yukoners. We were pleased last year to hear about the reduction in wait times for cataract assessments and surgery and are pleased to see positive results on timely access to ophthalmology care, as mentioned in the hospital's annual report for the last fiscal year.

Last year, the CEO also talked about the need to create a long-term strategy to maintain that improvement in cataract wait times, indicating — and I quote: “If we don’t create a strategy that maintains this, those wait times will increase right back to where they were.” Can the witnesses please tell us what the current wait times are to see an ophthalmologist and how many people are on the wait-list to receive cataract surgery?

Mr. Lucier: I will start this one off. Certainly, wait times for all the services that are provided through the corporation here in Whitehorse, Dawson, and Watson Lake are important metrics for us to keep an eye on. We are happy, though, to report that we are currently on track and have planned for 450 procedures this year in the ophthalmology care area. This is despite the pressures that have been ongoing within the hospital setting of COVID-19. I will turn it over to Mr. Bilsky, who, I believe, can provide some of the wait-time metrics.

Mr. Bilsky: As noted by the chair, we had significantly reduced wait times in the 2018-to-2020 period — over a two-year period. There was a reduction from 37 months down to just six months. As was noted by the chair, we had committed to performing 450 cataract surgeries this year, which we are on track to do. That is in spite of any type of disruption we have seen from COVID.

Wait times for referral to assessment are four months, and wait times for surgery are 18 months. Having said that, urgent times are two to three months, semi-urgent are three to six months, and non-urgent can be up to 21 months from initial referral to surgery. Having said that, the wait times have slipped slightly, but definitely not back to where they were a couple of years ago, and we are committed to carrying on with an increased number of cataract surgeries on an annual basis. We will continue to work with government to make sure that those are funded.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answer. I would just ask as well, in that area — I understood that the program that had been committed to was time-limited previously. Has that been extended or is work underway to create that long-term program extension right now?

Mr. Bilsky: Yes, the initial program we looked at was a two-year program. As I said, 2018 to 2020. We extended that for another year to increase the number of cataract surgeries, and roughly speaking, we moved that from about 250 a year up to over 500, and then 450 a year.

At this point in time, we did make some assessments as to whether resident ophthalmologists would make feasible and reasonable sense in the territory. At this point, in collaboration with physicians through YMA and work with the Department of Health and Social Services, we determined that we will continue to see if we can increase the number of surgeries per year, as we have been looking at for the last three years.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answer. I am just trying to clarify: Did I understand correctly then that the program right now is currently just committed to the end of the year but discussions are aimed at extending that? Or did I misunderstand that reply?

Mr. Bilsky: Access to specialist services such as ophthalmology is overseen by a tripartite group of YMA, the Department of Health and Social Services, and the Yukon Hospital Corporation. Discussions are ongoing to make sure that access to specialist services is maintained and wait times are addressed accordingly.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answer.

As the witnesses know, Whitehorse General Hospital was physically home to the majority of specialty services for Yukoners, but as witnesses told us when they appeared last year, the physical location is constrained. One of the quotes from comments from the witnesses last year was — and I quote: “... wait times for accessing specialties, basically for most specialties, are not where we would like them to be from a benchmark perspective.”

I recognize that, as we discussed last year, the services are provided by the hospital, but there are also other specialty services that the hospital is a physical space for, but the specialists themselves are under contract or another arrangement with the Yukon government. I recognize that distinction between the two, but also that most of the specialty services are operated out of the Whitehorse General Hospital itself.

Could the witnesses please tell us what the current situation is regarding wait times? Are we still in a situation where the wait times for accessing most specialties are not where the hospital would like to see them from a benchmark perspective? If that is the case, could you please describe whether steps are underway to expand the space for visiting specialists or to provide an alternate location to reduce wait times? Also, please update us on what the status is of any work that may be going on in that area.

Mr. Bilsky: Just to refresh, I think, everybody’s memory, YHC is part of a broader health system that supports access to specialty care and specialty services provided to Yukoners primarily through four means: resident specialists, such as OB/GYN, orthopaedic surgeons, general surgeons, psychiatrists, and pediatricians; visiting specialists, which were mentioned, primarily through the visiting specialist clinic located at Whitehorse General Hospital; virtually, so that would be things like telehealth; and lastly, medical travel — medevacs — so people having to leave the territory.

Increased and intentional coordination between these four methods is required to yield improvement. So, it is not just about increasing the space at WGH to be able to provide adequate access for Yukoners to specialty care; it is about creating timely, appropriate, and effective care in a fiscally responsible way.

As I mentioned earlier, collaboration is through the access to specialty care committee. This specialty care committee is a tripartite committee made up of members of YHC, Yukon Health and Social Services, and the YMA. It is a continuous conversation as to priorities and how to address these means — I would suggest that physical constraints at WGH continue to exist but are only one piece of the puzzle, as far as accessing specialists.

I think that I will stop there.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answer. I may have packed too many questions in there, but if we could go back to the question that I was asking about — are we still in a situation, much as we were last year, where wait times for most specialities are not where the hospital would like to see them from a benchmark perspective?

Mr. Bilsky: Again, there is a multitude or an infinite number of specialities and subspecialties. We in the territory host, I believe, 12 different specialties. Yes, I would agree that we are constrained as far as the number of clinics that can be held, which in turn means that, in some circumstances with certain specialties, the wait times are above what we would consider to be acceptable.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the answer. Does the hospital have — or would this be something to ask the government for — information where we could potentially see basically a breakdown of where it is for those specialties — what the typical wait times are and how it compares to what the Canadian benchmarks would be?

Mr. Bilsky: Sorry, Deputy Chair, I missed the very first part of that question. Can he rephrase that?

Mr. Cathers: I will start again. The microphone may not have been on.

My question was just that, for those specialties that we are talking about — the list of roughly a dozen specialties that the witness was referring to — does the hospital have a list that we might be able to get just showing how those typical wait times compare to the national benchmarks, or is that something that would be maintained perhaps by the government instead of the hospital? If we could have information on the comparison of average wait times for Yukoners for those specialty services compared to the national benchmark of what is considered medically acceptable — or the “medical target” perhaps would be a better way to put it. Is that list something we could get a copy of?

Mr. Bilsky: I think that the only component that Yukon Hospital Corporation would be able to provide would be the specialties that we host and the known wait times for those specialties.

As I mentioned earlier, depending on urgency and triaging, certain individuals may be travelling south, so we don't actually see the whole picture that's available — meaning that we may not see somebody who requires a certain level of care being seen down south and travelling down south. I am unable to provide the entire picture. I can only provide wait times for our specific clinics that we host here.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answer. Yes, if you could provide that list, that would be much appreciated — whether now or later, depending on whether you have it with you or not. It would be much appreciated to receive the information about the ones you host.

I want to move on to the area of the operating room and the surgical services area. There was the addition of another orthopaedic surgeon. Of course, while we are happy to see more services and procedures in this area, we have also heard concerns from physicians that the problem is that the operating room and surgical services area was already under pressure

from competing needs. As the witnesses will likely know, improvements to the surgical services area is also an issue that the Yukon Medical Association has raised in the past. I believe they raised it with all political parties during the spring election, and that's a priority for them.

Our understanding is that, when the additional orthopaedic surgeon was added, rather than just being an expansion of services, it also did mean that some other procedures had to be displaced to accommodate those additional procedures because of the limited room in the operating room and surgical services area. Can the witnesses please tell us what is being done now about the issue of the operating room and surgical services area pressure, and what is the status of work or discussions about improvements to the surgical services area, including expanding the capacity of it?

Mr. Bilsky: I'll start a little bit with orthopaedic services and then transition into the operating room in general. Our goal is to provide comprehensive orthopaedic services, which minimizes travel for patients. Care is provided for patients with elective and emergency problems. This program was aimed to access care and decrease wait times for consults. On April 21, 2020 — it is correct that a new model was introduced to allow for three or more resident orthopaedic surgeons, increased capacity to support urgent emergency procedures, and increased capacity to support joint replacement surgeries. In order to meet expected wait times, targets for total hip and knee replacement — an additional 20 procedures per year have been added to a total combined of 100 joint replacements. I am pleased to say that, in November of this year, we will begin to offer hip replacements in-territory to avoid travel for those who would have otherwise had to travel.

The ongoing evaluation and implementation of the orthopaedic program is supported through a partnership between Yukon Hospital Corporation, Health and Social Services, and resident orthopaedic surgeons, and they meet regularly to review the goals and outcomes of the program. To my knowledge, the increase in services has not displaced other uses of the operating room.

Lastly, I will say about orthopaedics — a very important point to note — that following the introduction of the orthopaedic program in 2017-18, 495 urgent cases have been completed at Yukon Hospital Corporation that would have otherwise been seen outside of the territory through medevacs and medical travel.

In regard to the long-term operating room planning, we conducted long-term planning related to future needs of surgical services that began in 2018-19. It's a very large and complex project. It has a time horizon of five to seven years, and it requires comprehensive stakeholder involvement to ensure that it appropriately meets the needs of Yukoners, care providers, and funders. As I said, it has a very long time horizon, and it is meant to project further into the future. It is basically meeting two components: One is the needs of Yukoners going forward, increasing aging demographics, as well as quality of care standards — or the care standards within surgical services — making sure that we bring our operating rooms up from 20-some years ago to today's quality of

standards, so it is not only predicated on the number of procedures that are flowing through, although that is part of the equation. Planning, including consideration of current rapidly changing quality standards and projected future service demands — a detailed solution has not yet been determined and no commitment has been made, although short-term improvements have been made within the existing surgical services area to mitigate challenges that have been spoken about.

In 2019, we moved the preoperative clinic, OR booking, and surgical services entrance — modifications to better support patients and staff. We created a flexible OR suite to decant day procedures like scopes out of the main ORs, freeing up the main ORs for procedures that are being spoken about here. The scope reprocessing unit was developed adjacent to the flexible OR suite — again, to meet standards of medical device reprocessing, things like sterilization — and the introduction of a post-anesthesia care unit to improve the quality of patient care post-surgery.

In 2020, we completed more sterile storage for the OR surgical services area — again, providing medical reprocessing more room to efficiently reprocess and store supplies. In 2020-21, we added OR sterile storage — again, to specifically accommodate the service demands, in particular for the orthopaedic program — again, trying to make sure that we're keeping pace with what's necessary.

I guess, in summary, I would say that the orthopaedic program — as far as our assessment — continues to be accessed and will continue to grow. Right now, at this point in time, we are planning for a long-term horizon of OR redevelopment.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answer from the witness about that. I would like to move on to the issues of the SMU — the new secure medical unit that is in the process of being developed. According to the hospital's annual report, the capital build and project, including materials, equipment and technology, is an investment of nearly \$19 million. The new unit, according to the annual report, will be designed this fall, built through 2022, and is projected to be open and operational in the spring of 2023.

My question is about the progress of the project. Is the project still on those timelines that were indicated in the hospital's annual report for last year? Have there been changes to the timeline or any changes to the scope or the estimated cost at this point in time, including, of course, the date when the hospital is expecting that it will be operational?

Mr. Lucier: Thank you for the questions, Deputy Chair, and the interest in this unit. This unit is very important to Yukoners. There is a slight change in terms of the terminology with which the board and corporation are referencing this project. It is now termed in our books as the "short-stay psychiatric unit", as opposed to the SMU.

This will be developed above the shelled space that was part of the build when the emergency department was built. When that wing, or that area of the hospital, was built, the foresight was given to provide a second floor above the emergency department, including a shaft for elevator access for appropriate egress and regress of the facility. This has been

shelled since that part of the hospital was opened, and the board was recently given a tour to see that facility.

I think that there are a couple of important points to point out here. Certainly, I have been involved with the CEO, as the board has been apprised on the ongoing developments of this, including the contract signing for some elements that are already underway in that respect. This new unit is going to give, I think, the greatest opportunity to show a great movement forward in indigenization for the corporation — something that the board and the corporation are very, very strong on their commitment to. This has included consultation and we will continue to include consultation with First Nations to ensure that the values, cultures, language, and ways of knowing, being, and doing are all integrated into the fabric of this new operation.

We believe that the commitment here represents the Yukon Hospital Corporation's ongoing commitment to healthy spaces, programs, and services for mental health in lockstep with the government's similar commitments to that. With respect to the specific timelines, I will turn it over to Mr. Bilsky, who will be able to provide that detail.

Mr. Bilsky: As the chair has alluded to, three specific streams of work — indigenization, program planning, and design and construction —

I will start off by basically summarizing. Yes, all components are on track as we had planned them. Indigenization is the opportunity for engagement with First Nations, and its timeline is basically from the current period until the end of the year, and we have laid out the opportunity on how engagement should occur, including steering team engagement.

The people and program stream — program review is basically from October of this year until the end of December, and operational readiness will occur from January to March, and that is well underway.

Lastly, as mentioned by the chair, the build stream — design and construction contracts have been signed, and those will continue through until the end of 2022. Construction is expected from essentially early in the new year of 2022 until February 2023, and we are expecting the first patient day in the spring of 2023.

Lastly, I would like to say that, as our chair has mentioned, I really appreciate the interest in this project. I would like to give special note to the Yukon Hospital Foundation that has established a new multi-year campaign to support this project and has set a target of raising \$1.5 million to support the project of improving the mental wellness environment at Whitehorse General Hospital, which is very important for us and very important for Yukoners.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the answers from the witnesses. At this point, with the project formerly called the "secure medical unit", are the witnesses able to indicate what the estimated increase in O&M costs will be once the hospital is then staffing and running that facility?

Mr. Bilsky: At this point, we are not exactly, or even approximately, able to say what the increased O&M costs will be, and that is because two elements that would really impact this are indigenization and program planning. Program

planning is currently underway and is essentially there to determine what types of enhanced programming will be available. That will obviously have an impact on the operating and maintenance costs of this unit.

Mr. Cathers: I would just ask if there is, at this point, a ballpark estimate of the O&M costs that they could provide, recognizing that it may be subject to refinement and potentially approval processes. The other question that I would just add regarding the secure medical unit is: Once the current space is vacated — once the development of the new secure medical unit is done — what is the plan for using this space that it currently occupies?

Mr. Bilsky: At this point, I think that it would be irresponsible for me to provide even an estimate. I say this because a significant amount of work has yet to be done as far as program planning and ensuring that the program and services that we collectively design meet Yukoners' needs. That will have a significant impact on the cost — it will determine the cost — so at this point, I couldn't provide an estimate.

On the second part of the question about the vacated space, it's a small wing. It was previously an inpatient wing at WGH. Based on our estimates of population growth and expansion necessary to meet that population growth and demographic changes in the Yukon, we are planning to revert that back into inpatient space again. It is approximately eight rooms. That will help to meet the needs for Yukoners going forward for the next five or possibly even 10 years as far as inpatient space.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answer, and I look forward to hearing cost estimates associated with the new facility as soon as the hospital is in a position to share those, recognizing the work that the witness just referred to.

I want to move on to the topic of vaccinations for COVID. I am pleased to see the indication in the hospital's annual report that, as of earlier this year, 95 percent of hospital staff are fully vaccinated. Can the witnesses indicate what the current vaccination status is of hospital staff and what they anticipate it being at the end of November? Finally, on that topic, what operational impacts are expected as a result of those employees who choose not to get fully vaccinated? Can the witnesses please talk about what is being done to mitigate any negative operational impacts?

Mr. Bilsky: First of all, I would like to say that, as a health care institution, it is our obligation to take all of the necessary steps to protect and keep safe the public and our staff. The public truly need to feel safe coming to our hospitals when they are in need, and this requires confidence that we are doing all we can to keep them safe. Unvaccinated staff and physicians pose a risk to patients, visitors, volunteers, other staff, and physicians, along with themselves. This risk is just one that we are not prepared to accept. Therefore, we must ensure that vaccination is a condition of employment and/or a condition of being in a privileged position. This is all about ensuring the continuity of services to the greatest possible extent and public confidence in our hospital systems.

As of the first round of vaccinations — meaning in the spring when we initially vaccinated our staff and physicians — we estimated that we achieved a vaccination rate of probably in

excess of 95 percent of all staff and physicians. We did this successfully and thankfully through support from government and the CMOH to institute a peer immunization program, which means that we were able to host our own clinic and vaccinate our people and to do it with the least amount of service disruption possible.

Mandatory vaccination is important to us. We are midstream in the process right now. We are expecting that, by the end of November, all of our staff in privileged positions would be fully vaccinated. At this point, we have assessed that we have about 14 people whom this impacts. Half of those people are permanent employees — either part time or full time. The other half are essentially casual or temporary employees. At this point, we're not expecting any service disruption or issues with continuity of service. The people who are impacted — a small handful of our employee base, staff, and team — are spread throughout the system.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answer. I'm pleased to hear about the progress in that area. We do recognize that patient safety must be the top priority.

I would also ask, then, when it comes to the issue of staff vaccination — we do have an issue, for those who were vaccinated early, of potentially waning immunity. My understanding — from what I've seen — is that, while booster shots are being made available to everyone 50 years old and up, it doesn't seem that the hospital or other health professionals have received that third booster option for everyone, regardless of age. Of course, that is in contrast to a number of other jurisdictions that have recognized that health care professionals are at a higher risk and have made those booster shots available to all health care workers, not just those over the age of 50, as in the Yukon.

The CEO made mention of "peer vaccination" — I believe that was the term that he used. Is that an option that is being looked at right now — rolling out the availability of booster shots for health care workers who are under the age of 50 and the option of the hospital to avoid the use of resources in the other clinics, which are somewhat strained, to potentially be administering those booster shots themselves?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Deputy Chair's statement

Deputy Chair: This time is dedicated for questions to witnesses and so I will ask the witnesses to respond to the question. Unless the member is rising on a point of order, I will allow the opposition to continue their questions to the witnesses.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am sure that Mr. Bilsky can answer this, but it has certainly been the practice in the past that a minister could rise on a question that they have the answer to or that is of a political nature.

Deputy Chair: I will take a moment to confer.

Deputy Chair's statement

Deputy Chair: I will recognize the Member for Riverdale South and ask her to be brief in her remarks.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you, Deputy Chair. I am happy to do that.

It is an important issue being raised by the member opposite. It is something that the YHC and Health and Social Services have been conferring and working together on. Very recently, booster shots started yesterday at the Yukon Hospital Corporation for all front-line health care workers at the hospital, and I will let Mr. Bilsky address that. I can indicate that it expands to all front-line health care workers with the Department of Health and Social Services as well. It happens to be quite convenient at the hospital because they can administer the clinic, as can nursing stations — health care centres — across the territory, and that work is underway as we speak, precisely for the reason mentioned by the member opposite. Our health care workers were immunized quite early, and it is important that their rates of vaccination and their ability to fight — the Yukon opportunities for COVID-19 are critically important. So, as a result, that is already happening.

Mr. Bilsky: Without repeating too much of what was commented on by the minister, we are proud to say that we were able to quickly begin the administration of the booster shots for front-line health care workers. We are supporting not just those within WGH, but those outside of WGH, whether they be community nursing aspects or EMS, I believe, as well.

We believe that we can probably immunize all those who require booster shots — or the majority — this week. It is peer immunization. Why that is important to us is because we are able to achieve very high levels of vaccination, we believe. It minimizes the disruption caused, meaning that people in our organization are able to access the booster shots right within our facilities.

It also builds confidence within our workforce basically in terms of confidence in what we're doing and for morale. It is all geared toward making sure that we can continue to offer safe and excellent hospital care without service disruption because people are offline for various reasons related to COVID. I am very pleased with the support that we have had from the Department of Health and Social Services and the CMOH in this regard.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answer from the witnesses. I am very pleased to hear that the booster shots are already being provided there. It is a concern that I had heard from people who were affected by that.

Could you please indicate if the booster shots being provided are being made available as well to the physicians who are there? The CEO had indicated in earlier remarks — or perhaps it was the chair — that there are nearly 100 physicians who have hospital privileges. Are they also receiving booster shots? Are those booster shots then being made available to all staff of the hospitals or just those who are in front-line positions, recognizing, of course, that we are hoping that they are being made available to everyone who works there?

Mr. Bilsky: These are very important remarks — absolutely, this does include physicians as partners in our hospital teams. They are included in getting booster shots.

Yes, it includes all of our staff and all members of our team. We have asked that we prioritize front-line health care

workers first, but when we say “prioritize”, we are talking about the first few days of this week versus the last few days of this week. As I mentioned earlier, we are expecting that we can achieve, again, a very high level of vaccination rates just within this week.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate that answer. I would just ask, on the issue of the specific pressure that the people who have contracted COVID are putting on the hospital: Are the witnesses able to talk about how many COVID patients are currently in hospital and what those numbers have been recently, as well as how many of those are in the ICU and how many of the ICU beds are currently in use at the moment?

Mr. Bilsky: I will go back right to the beginning of COVID. For the first, I would say, year of COVID, we saw only a handful of COVID-positive patients within our system. By “handful”, I mean probably approximately 10 or fewer. During the first true outbreak in June of this year, there was a significant increase in the number of COVID-positive patients whom we saw in hospital. During that first outbreak, we probably saw, in the next few months after June, approximately 60 or so patients.

During that period, we saw spikes up to about eight patients, at any given time, admitted into hospital. Again, we are seeing a very similar spike or increase in the number over the past, I would say, couple of weeks. During that period of August through September and early October, we would average between zero and one or two COVID-positive patients admitted. As of today, or actually yesterday morning, we would see about nine COVID-positive patients admitted in hospital. It has been about that number for the last week or so.

Specific to the ICU — I think that was also part of the question — we have seen between two and four COVID-positive patients in the ICU. What occurs when we see three COVID-positive patients in the ICU due to it being an isolated negative pressure area, it becomes basically COVID only. That means that we see pressures on our critical care areas of the hospital — the emergency department and our ICU. It means that non-COVID ICU patients are then cared for in the emergency department, and/or, if necessary, they would have to be moved south to tertiary care centres.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answer, although the secondary impacts that the witness outlined are concerning for other patients.

My understanding is that there are still just four ICU beds in the Yukon. There was some talk of potentially expanding that. There was an indication, I believe, by the former chair last fall that there had been some consideration to expanding that, if necessary, due to a spike in cases on a temporary basis. Is that something that is being considered or something that is out there as a plan for emergency situations? If so, what would that involve and what would trigger that type of decision?

Mr. Bilsky: Yes, it is correct that we have four dedicated ICU beds that were initially built in conjunction with the new emergency department as one larger critical care area in its entirety.

We have detailed surge plans that account for situations like we are in today where we start seeing an increased number

of COVID-positive patients. What would trigger the potential of a secondary ICU would be the situation that we are in today.

Unfortunately, because of the significant constraint that we have on human resources — and this is a national constraint that we have — we are unable to basically staff a secondary ICU at this point in time, and we discovered this early in the summer with the outbreak that happened in June.

Again, the human resources constraints that we are seeing most recently this year are extraordinary. That just means that we are unable to staff a secondary ICU with critical care unit nurses. What that means — as I already mentioned — is that all of our critical care unit resources are being deployed into the emergency department and into the current ICU. That is where, essentially, we care for patients who require intensive care right now.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answer. Certainly, that is concerning to hear. I appreciate the pressures that are on all of the staff in the system there.

I want to move on to the area of the OB/GYN program, which is hosted at the WGH campus. Are the witnesses able to tell us about the wait times and the current status of the program? We understand that one of the two OB/GYN doctors in the territory is on leave. Are the witnesses able to talk about what impact that has had on the program?

Mr. Bilsky: Just for clarification's sake, the OB/GYN clinic that is being referred to is actually an independent clinic. It is within the premises of Whitehorse General Hospital's campus, but it is a leased premises to a clinic, so I can't comment on anything to do with wait times or any clinic services that are provided within that.

What Whitehorse General Hospital requires as far as services is basically OB/GYN 24/7 on-call support. They are the most responsible physicians for patients being followed by an OB/GYN; they consult with specialists; they consult with or are specialists consulting with general practitioners on OB matters. They do emergency deliveries like C-sections, colpo clinics, urgent or emergent other care, and participate in a number of hospital committees.

At this point in time, I can't comment on things such as wait times for OB/GYN services, although I can say that recently one of the two permanent OB/GYN surgeons is currently on an unplanned and extended leave. I understand that it is challenging the program, for sure, and places a large burden on the single remaining OB/GYN. The government is aware of this, and they have quickly supported with locum resources to ensure that there is continuity of services. I also understand that it is extremely challenging to sustain the 24/7 coverage required with one person or possibly even two people.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answer. I would just like to move on to the issue of midwifery. How involved has the Yukon Hospital Corporation been in the work by government to establish midwifery as a regulated service in the territory and offer it? There have been some questions about the ability of midwives to get privileges, and I would just ask if the witnesses could provide us with an update and talk about both the opportunities and the challenges of integrating that valuable service in a way that it functions well within the hospital

context, as well as, of course, ensuring a smooth transition if there is a need for a home birth to end up moving to one of the hospitals due to an emergency situation.

Mr. Lucier: Thank you very much for the question. The board has been actively involved in this issue with the corporation and the executive there since early summer. The requirement of privileging is not that much different from privileging for any of the medical staff who require such a designation to operate within the hospital.

However, because it is a new service and a new function, it requires an adaptation or an amendment to the bylaws. The bylaws are the corporation's bylaws, and so we have been involved and received very good support from the corporation and the services that they have access to, as well as ongoing dialogue and discussion with the government.

So, we are at a place where those amendments have been presented. We have a bit of work yet to do to ensure that those amendments meet the requirements of privileging. At that point, the privileging of the midwives will be established for the hospital. I will turn it to Mr. Bilsky, who can provide any further and specific details.

Mr. Bilsky: Just to give maybe a little bit of added operational context, as was mentioned by our chair, midwives will be integrated into a team of professionals within YHC and will be privileged similar to physicians, nurse practitioners, and dentists. The operational context — midwives will interface with YHC through the use of outpatient lab, medical imaging, and outpatient and inpatient maternity care. Right now, the focus is on supporting midwives to use the outpatient services at YHC, such as lab, medical imaging, and maternity services, and then we are preparing for midwives to be a part of the team to provide inpatient maternity care and attend to births in the spring of 2022.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answer from the witnesses.

I will just move on to a question passed on to me by the Member for Copperbelt South. He had heard that there may be challenges around the supply of medical oxygen. I would just ask if that is indeed the case and, if so, if the witnesses could just talk about what the issue is and what is being done to ensure that this doesn't become a serious problem that impacts patient care.

Mr. Bilsky: This is another very important question and another very important area for the hospital. Early on in the life of this pandemic, it was really stressed that things like ventilators were important and whatnot, but I don't think it was recognized at that point in time that the true bottleneck is people to be able to actually operate them and the actual oxygen supply for things like ventilators and air volume — and just all oxygen that is available.

This is one of the services that, on an ongoing basis for the Yukon Hospital Corporation, is just one of those continuing services that just has to be there 100 percent of the time, 365 days of the year. To ensure that we mitigate the risk of running out of oxygen, we have several oxygen concentrators that we keep well maintained — service continuity plans for those. In addition to that, we maintain bottled oxygen to supplement in a

few different forms and make sure that we have fairly regular and open contact with the contractors who supply those — the bottled oxygen to supplement. We monitor oxygen usage, especially in peak times — it could be as much as every two hours — to understand how much is being used and when it's being used. We make sure that we have an adequate supply on hand.

At this point in time, I would say that we are in high oxygen usage right now. Just to give maybe a bit of context or a bit of understanding, the concentrators are working at peak capacity right now, but we still have multiple, multiple days of oxygen supply. We know how long the resupply period takes, so we always knock on wood that we can maintain that, but right now, we're monitoring it very closely and making sure that we have plans in place for continuity.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the information from the witnesses. Just moving on to the issue of the IHealth platform, we are very pleased to see this going forward. It is something that we have been calling for, and I have been personally calling for it since the spring of 2017. I am pleased to see that it is going ahead. I also recognize that there are always challenges in implementing a system like this.

Can the witnesses please tell us what the status is of that system and how things are going in terms of both implementing it and getting everyone who needs to understand the system being used using it effectively and efficiently?

Mr. Lucier: I appreciate the question, and I appreciate the understanding of the complexities of technology and of change management, for sure. Those are key elements, I think, to moving this forward as there are a multitude of different users. The outcomes for each of those are equally as important but different in every respect.

IHealth is a single electronic record that is going to connect the territory's health providers and the information that they have together. Certainly, the board has been apprised of this.

The very first meeting that I attended this past summer had, in large part, a great degree of information shared on that. There has been a lot of catching up — I must admit — that I have had to do with respect to that.

I think that it's important that what we're trying to achieve here is the ability to exchange secure information between health care providers. It's a worthwhile investment, and work continues every day to ensure that the different constituencies that use this — and the information contained in it is maintained, coordinated, and provides Yukoners with the best possible outcome. For the specific details of some of the actions with respect to the partnership that the corporation has with Health and Social Services and the rollout of this, I will turn it to Mr. Bilsky.

Mr. Bilsky: As was mentioned, IHealth is a joint project. The Department of Health and Social Services, Yukon Hospital Corporation, and the YMA have partnered to provide Yukon with one integrated health information system.

I think — as people are aware — the Hospital Corporation has been using a system called Meditech that is far, far outdated — probably over 20 years old — and it requires a significant

upgrade and update. This is being leveraged across the entire health system to create one health information system, not just a hospital information system.

The specifics of where the project is at the moment — the hospital information system was the first “go live” area. It was quickly followed recently by some long-term care facilities. Again, it's a partnership among Health and Social Services, YHC, and YMA, so I can't speak on other components of the system and exactly where they are at.

As was mentioned by the chair, it has been challenging for all aspects of the system — all constituents of the system — not the least of whom are the physicians. As with any new system, there is a significant change in workflow that is involved. I would like to say that, right now, the hospital system is in a period of stabilization, meaning that we're working through any of the issues that we have to make sure that the system functions as intended for all constituents of the system and we will continue to apply the resources necessary to make sure that it does so.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answer. I would just ask as well — the witnesses, I'm sure, are well aware of the situation that happened in Newfoundland regarding their health system and the cyberattack that occurred.

I am guessing that there may be information that is not being shared with hospitals, just as the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is not sharing it publicly. I would also be mindful, of course. I don't want to unintentionally, in asking questions about this, do anything to compromise the cybersecurity. Since it was the Meditech system being used as well in Newfoundland — I believe an older platform version, but I am not clear on which version they had — could the witnesses just talk for a moment about cybersecurity in general and what is being done to ensure that we have all of the necessary safeguards in place to prevent our system from ever being hit by a cyberattack such as happened to our fellow Canadians in Newfoundland and Labrador?

Mr. Lucier: Absolutely. I can't speak — and maybe Mr. Bilsky can speak to the specifics that have been shared with him around the situation in Newfoundland. But I can tell you that cybersecurity — because of the nature of how it can disrupt services, create unsafe situations, expose Yukoners' private information to nefarious uses — is a significant concern of the board. In fact, at the last board meeting, it was raised. A number of our systems are integrated systems with other elements of the health care service providers and the systems that we work as partners with, including Health and Social Services and the Government of Yukon.

Being able to be one step ahead of those who play in this field — and I use “play” as a bit of a colloquial term — is a difficult thing to be ahead of, but it is of utmost concern to our board. It has been expressed to the corporation. Through Mr. Bilsky, we have, in the event of a cyberattack, just recently reviewed the insurance policies related to it — not that this stops it, but it gives us a backstop to be able to make reparation if required.

The systems that we use, not just IHealth but all of them, are a critical access point to people's information. Maintaining

that criticality and the security around them is paramount and foremost in our minds.

With respect to the specifics of any information that Mr. Bilsky could share on the Newfoundland similarities or our circumstances, I will turn it over to him. Thank you very much for the question, Deputy Chair.

Mr. Bilsky: Another absolutely very important issue being raised — my empathy goes out to Newfoundland. I know the CEO well enough there, and nobody is immune from cyberattacks of any kind.

Having said that, Yukon hospitals, in conjunction with the Yukon government, use a cybersecurity framework. That framework is about risk management because, as I said, you are not immune. That risk management is about having the appropriate security protocols in place. It's about detection and monitoring, it's about reporting, and it's about continuity and resumption of service in the case that there is an attack and what you would do in those circumstances.

Specific to Meditech, one very important reason why Meditech was instituted and upgraded was to improve our security in the cyberworld significantly by bringing forward the technology from, as I said, over 20-year-old technology to today's technology. Again, it is an important step in improving cybersecurity for us.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate that answer. I am very pleased to hear that cybersecurity is an issue that is front and centre right now for the board, the CEO, and management as well. In recognition of the time we're at here and in the interest of respecting the practice of the House to turn it over to the Third Party critic for questions, I am just going to ask one last question. That is: How involved and informed has the hospital been in the government's plans to develop "Wellness Yukon" as they committed to in accepting the recommendations of *Putting People First*? We understand that they are creating a new model that would likely be a health authority. How involved and informed has the hospital been in that work?

With that, I will just conclude my questions and thank the witnesses as well for appearing here, for answering questions, and for the work that they and everyone at the Yukon Hospital Corporation do each and every day on behalf of Yukoners.

Mr. Lucier: Thank you very much, Deputy Chair, for the question. As with other questions, I will turn this over quickly to Mr. Bilsky for his perspective.

Putting People First is certainly a framework of an integrated network or a change in the approach of health services.

As I took this position over in June — having reviewed the report extensively — I noted that, if it was brought to full fruition — in whatever time frame that might be — there would be significant consequence for the Hospital Corporation, the act under which we work, the relationship of my position to the minister and my position to the CEO, and the existence of the board.

So, it was a question that I had for the minister in terms of this. Suffice it to say that the understanding of the board and my understanding is that the progress and the work toward this will include us, as it almost certainly has to in order to advance.

At this point, we have had early discussions, none of which have had any degree of specificity. We continue to work collectively — the board, the executive, my position, the minister, and the department — respecting the fact that the best way to deliver health care is through a collaborative means — a collaborative system where we at the Hospital Corporation and the hospitals of the Yukon provide that acute care, but not in absolute existence of every other element of that. When we understand that and we can share that, then we will have better services for all Yukoners.

I will turn it to Mr. Bilsky with respect to the corporation's work currently.

Mr. Bilsky: As everybody is aware, the report was released by the independent expert panel over a year ago, I believe. Prior to this, Yukon Hospital Corporation had a significant amount of contribution to it — basically as a stakeholder in the review process. Many of the themes, the changes, and the recommendations — such as health care system integration, improved patient-centeredness, enhanced community involvement, advancement of reconciliation of First Nation people, and development of a robust virtual/digital health environment — we also raised these and we supported many of these. A large number of these recommendations already happened to be areas of focus and work within Yukon hospitals.

So, as the chair has already mentioned, we will continue to work collaboratively with YG on health systems based on these recommendations.

Ms. Blake: I would like to start by thanking our witnesses for being here today. I appreciate that you are here, giving us your time to answer some questions. I would like to start with going back to the question about midwifery services in Yukon with granting hospital privileges. Is there any consideration to also grant hospital privileges to the midwives to practise within community hospitals, such as Watson Lake and Dawson City?

Mr. Bilsky: At this point, consideration is not given to midwives practising in community hospitals, other than the privileges they have been granted for community services. The issue with practising in community hospitals would be the lack of support facilities for urgent care for obstetrical services in the community hospitals. I believe, if I'm not mistaken, the regulations that are provided by government wouldn't allow for midwives to practise outside the radius of WGH.

Ms. Blake: In the annual report, it talks about the Dawson and Watson Lake hospitals and the services they offer, including 24/7 emergency, on-site imaging, and pharmacy services. What other services are available, and are there times when patients from communities are taken to either of these hospitals instead of being sent directly to Whitehorse to access services?

Mr. Bilsky: If I understand the question correctly, it is: What programs and services are being offered in Watson Lake Community Hospital?

I can speak specifically to the hospital services provided. Other than that, there are public health services as well as clinical and pharmacy services. They are provided in the

building but not by the Hospital Corporation. Programs and services in both community hospitals include 24/7 emergency care, in-patient and ambulatory care, X-rays, telehealth, laboratory services, First Nation health programs, and also visiting ultrasound on a rotating basis through the facilities.

Ms. Blake: I am also wondering if there is access for services with the community hospitals in Dawson and Watson Lake from the surrounding communities.

Mr. Bilsky: Yes. Access to services in our hospital system — and we consider it one system — is where the care is most appropriately provided. Access from communities can be provided in the community hospitals within that hub or catchment area and/or could be transferred to Whitehorse if necessary and possibly even tertiary care centres south if necessary.

Ms. Blake: In the chief of medical staff's report from last year, 2019-20, there were three full-time psychiatrists at WGH. Is this still the case?

Mr. Bilsky: Yes, other than that there were some issues with psychiatry — as we had met last year, there were issues with psychiatry. There are three full-time psychiatrists — possibly a fourth — but at least three full-time psychiatrists who are privileged in providing 24/7 on-call coverage at WGH at this point in time.

Ms. Blake: In regard to the psychiatrists who are at WGH, do patients still need a referral from a family doctor before they can be seen by one of these psychiatrists?

Mr. Bilsky: I can't speak when it comes to outside of hospital work that is being done, meaning clinic and referral patterns that happen there, but in general, yes, it would be common course and requirement for access to any specialist services that it is going to require a referral from a general practitioner.

Ms. Blake: I appreciate the answer and it is a question that I wanted to ask, because we have heard from citizens in Whitehorse who have gone to access mental health supports at the emergency department, and they were provided with a Canadian Mental Health Association phone number and told that they needed a referral from their family doctor, but they don't have family doctors. So, in that, I was wondering: What is the Yukon Hospital Corporation doing to support patients who don't have access to a family doctor?

Mr. Bilsky: Again, it's a very important issue — access to a family doctor and all that comes with it. As I had mentioned earlier, the best way to answer this question is that, if you need care of any kind, especially urgent care, Yukon Hospital Corporation will make sure that we provide that care. Again, regardless of the situation, if you need to enter the system through the emergency department and need care, we will attend to the care and make sure that it is appropriate to meet your needs. I believe that would include potential transition to support systems for mental health, whether they are in community or to psychiatrists as well.

Ms. Blake: In the past few days, we've been hearing about front-line workers facing increased rates of violence or abuse from patients and I was wondering if this is being experienced by staff working at Whitehorse General Hospital.

If they are facing higher rates of violence or abuse from patients, what forms of support do they have in place for support staff?

Mr. Bilsky: Yes, we are aware of increased tensions and potential of various forms of safety and violence issues, mostly predicated recently with COVID and the strains of COVID. There are two things that I would like to speak about here: One is a program of occupational health and safety, and two is our health care security officer program.

It is our intent with the occupational health and safety program to prevent workplace violence, injuries, and illness, and if incidents do occur, we ensure that there is a process to identify incidents and analyze and improve if necessary.

Speaking about the health care security officer program that was recently instituted — and again, this goes back to issues we had around mental wellness and psychiatry services — we engaged an Outside security firm which is an international leader in hospital and mental health services. After the review, we instituted certain changes to that program. It included the recommendation to develop a new health care security program that provides improved patient- and staff-focused training and programming. We previously had only three FTEs dedicated to our facilities and now we have over 11 health security officers offering two times, 24/7, 365 presence. This is predicated on a real focus and shift in perspective from building security to a people-focused security that includes training and knowledge on trauma-informed practices and Department of Education-escalation practices. In combination with those two, we hope to and will continue to be vigilant in making sure that violence isn't an issue for our people and that we have safe places for our people to work.

Mr. Lucier: I would just like to add — because this program is relatively new in the way that it is being used now — that, as many of you will know, I come from a security background and the approach that I am seeing utilized here is really first rate. We have had accounts given to us through the First Nation health council that upholds the fact that our folks who are being utilized in this way are absolutely using this people-focused approach, as opposed to an enforcement approach.

We have had accounts provided about their interaction with elders, with young people, and with people across the spectrum from the psychiatric areas to the emergency department. As this program continues to develop, it will continue to serve the needs of the corporation and the security of the staff but, most importantly, the interest of Yukoners. I am really quite proud to see this being developed in the way that it is with the support of the community, the folks who come to our hospitals, and the staff in the way that it is being done. Thank you very much for the question.

Ms. Blake: I appreciate the response. In referencing telehealth in the communities with the rising COVID cases in the territory, can I get more clarification on what telehealth services are offered to the communities from the hospital?

Mr. Bilsky: I don't have the specifics on the actual services provided but, where it is possible and we can provide any telehealth services in communities and elsewhere, we are

doing everything possible to facilitate telehealth communications.

Ms. Blake: With the recent widespread community transmission, does the hospital anticipate elective surgeries being delayed?

Mr. Bilsky: That is another important question. As I have mentioned probably several times and as our chair has mentioned, continuity of service is very important to us.

Our role and our objective is to ensure that we provide that service — that care — that is needed for both COVID and especially non-COVID patients so that issues don't become larger issues for people.

At this point in time, we have avoided widespread disruption of services, and we haven't had yet — for a long period of time — to discontinue elective surgeries. There have been short periods of time when elective surgeries have been discontinued, but right now we are maintaining the schedule as was initially intended.

This is monitored, I would say, weekly, if not daily, to make sure that we can provide the safe care that is necessary to all Yukoners. Probably the only disruption that we are seeing right now is to those who truly need ICU care post-surgery. That would be one disruption that we're seeing at the moment.

Ms. Blake: In the chief of medical staff's report from last year, it says that there are six nurse practitioners who have hospital privileges. In the list of what they could do in the hospital, it did not mention the emergency department. Does the Yukon Hospital Corporation support nurse practitioners working in the emergency department? If so, where are they and what are the plans to get them to lighten the load of private-practice doctors?

Mr. Bilsky: Options do exist for the inclusion of NPs within facilities as either privileged practitioners or as staff members or employees. Currently, the privileged NPs are engaged in the primary care model, which means that they are basically privileged practitioners and may attend to patients in hospital. Privileging provisions for NP care are made within the medical staff bylaws. They may become employees of the hospital base system with the appropriate skillset and job requirements, and we have hired NPs in the past — not specifically in the emergency department. The emergency department right now — most responsible practitioners are privileged physicians within the emergency department. Planning would be required to determine if nurse practitioners could be introduced into that care setting — into the critical care setting. My understanding right now is that — two things — it's generally outside of the scope of practice of nurse practitioners to provide that full scope of care within the emergency department, and it's also very difficult to find and recruit nurse practitioners with the appropriate skillset.

Ms. Blake: In reference to the new secure medical unit that is going to be in the process of being built — and I'm excited to hear that it is happening because I understand the constraints of the existing secure medical unit.

For folks listening online, I was just wondering if I could get clarification on what indigenization would mean for the folks listening?

Mr. Lucier: As Mr. Bilsky gets his notes, I just want to speak briefly to indigenization, not that it's a brief subject. Our current strategic plan that is coming to an end here this spring — when I came in and I looked at it, there was a gap. There are two ways to approach the priority of indigenization. Either you make it a priority or you expect it to be woven through the priorities. The latter, in my experience, has never really been brought fully to bear the inclusion, the involvement, and the decision-making of the elements of indigenization that are important.

In our territory, they are paramount for a number of different reasons. As we move forward — to be clear, the strategic plan is not the board's strategic plan. It is the strategic plan of the corporation for which the board will support and provide guidance and direction if required. It is our anticipation that the new strategic plan will have a pillar of priority firmly and solely dedicated to indigenization. This is a commitment of the board and is guided by our First Nation board members and First Nations Health Programs at the corporation — as well as inclusion of the Council of Yukon First Nations health commission — as well as, I believe, most recently in respect of the short-stay psychiatric unit, the executive director of the Council of Yukon First Nations has recently come on as a functional support and advisor to the development of that unit.

In terms of what that means, I think it means spaces that are appropriate. I think it means practices that are understanding of the cultural differences. It is care providers who understand those differences and take time to realize and practise in a way that is supportive and inclusive of First Nation ideals, culture, and beliefs. It is, as one of our board members says, the way of doing and the way of being that I think is so important. I think that this will wind its way through the way the space looks, the way the space is constructed, the programs that are delivered, and the type of people, quite frankly, who are hired to provide that. Those are all key elements.

Maybe Mr. Bilsky can speak to some of the specifics of that. Of course, we are still very much in the development of those areas, but I will turn it over to Mr. Bilsky, Deputy Chair.

Mr. Bilsky: I apologize. It took me a minute as I had to refer to a couple of places to make sure that I had a consolidated answer. Lo and behold, our chair was able to answer the entire question, essentially, from my perspective.

Indigenization, as far as we are concerned and as was stated, is what we are doing to make that unit — and essentially our organization — suit the local culture through the recognition and adoption of indigenous world views. This really does mean the transformation of the spaces, the services, the policies, the programs, and the inclusion of more indigenous people in our workforce, being more representative.

Specific to the SMU, all those things are encompassed and it is actually the way that we're approaching the project that is different from before as far as indigenization, including First Nation rights holders and helping to decide how and what all those services, programs, and spaces will look like and how we approach that project.

Ms. Blake: I appreciate the answer and clarification for those who are listening.

I just have one last question with regard to First Nation health programs in community hospitals. I was wondering if those programs are fully staffed in Watson Lake and Dawson City. How many patients do they provide support to?

With that, I would like to extend my thanks to all Yukon hospital staff who provide health care services for our territory.

Mr. Bilsky: Thank you for the question, Deputy Chair. Again, it is a very important topic.

First Nation health programming in communities is essentially coordinated and is part of the system of the First Nation health program, as a system in the territory, with all of the Yukon Hospital Corporation. There are two staffed positions or two positions within each facility — community service workers — and they provide the function of liaison and interface with all of the First Nation health program services, whether it be traditional medicine, traditional food, liaison work, spiritual interface and care, and a multitude of other areas that are involved in the First Nation health program. The position in Dawson City is currently occupied and staffed and is working very well with Tr'ondëk Hwëch' in First Nation.

The position in Watson Lake is currently vacant. It has been vacant since, I believe, the spring, and we are currently recruiting for a full-time permanent employee in that location. Again, our relationship with the Liard First Nation in Watson Lake is very important, so we are very eager and active in trying to recruit for that position.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: On behalf of Committee of the Whole, I would like to thank Al Lucier, who is the chair of the Yukon Hospital Corporation Board of Trustees, and Jason Bilsky, who is the chief executive officer of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, for appearing today as witnesses. Your extensive knowledge has helped Yukoners understand more about the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the importance of the services provided there and at the community hospitals.

Thank you very much for being here today.

Witnesses excused

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

May the House have a report from the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*, and directed me to report progress.

Also, pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 2 adopted earlier today, witnesses appeared before Committee of

the Whole to answer questions related to the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to

Speaker: The House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:26 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled November 16, 2021:

35-1-29

Yukon Liquor Corporation Annual report — April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021 (Pillai)

The following documents were filed November 16, 2021:

35-1-19

Better Buildings Loan Program, letter re (dated November 6, 2021) from Denny Kobayashi, Executive Director, Yukon Chamber of Commerce, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (Mostyn)

35-1-20

Government of Yukon Better Buildings Program Announcement, letter re (dated November 1, 2021) from Lars Hartling, Chair, Board of Directors, and Susan Guatto, Executive Director, Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (Mostyn)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 33

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, November 17, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier Government House Leader* Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
Hon. Nils Clarke	Riverdale North	Minister of Highways and Public Works; Environment
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Government House Leader* Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Minister of Economic Development; Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Jeanie McLean	Mountainview	Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

Currie Dixon	Leader of the Official Opposition Copperbelt North	Scott Kent	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Yvonne Clarke	Porter Creek Centre	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Emily Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Annie Blake	Vuntut Gwitchin

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

*Government House Leader: Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee to November 4, 2021; Hon. John Streicker from November 5, 2021

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, November 17, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.
 We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. The following motion has been removed from the Order Paper as the action requested has been taken: Motion No. 138, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge.

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will proceed at this time with the Order Paper.

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like my colleagues in the Assembly to welcome the chair of the Yukon Lottery Commission, Mr. Frank Curlew, who is here with us today.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Jessica Frotten and Stephanie Dixon

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I rise today to pay tribute to two exceptional Yukoners: Jessica Frotten and Stephanie Dixon.

The Paralympics is the most celebrated competition for para athletes in the world. These games bring together para athletes from around the globe, giving them the opportunity to come together to celebrate sport, diversity, and achievement.

This year from August 24 to September 5, Canada wowed the world at the 2020 Tokyo Paralympic Games. I know that their success on the international stage owes a lot to the Yukon's own Stephanie Dixon. Stephanie was Team Canada's chef de mission, a vital leadership role for sport contingents during the major games. I don't think that it's a surprise to any of us that she was chosen for this important position. Stephanie is a true leader and has achieved so much over the years: five gold medals at the 2000 summer Paralympics; world records; induction into Canada's Sports Hall of Fame; and becoming a member of the Order of Canada. She is a true inspiration to so many, and I know that she played a vital role in leading Team Canada to a very successful games.

Jessica Frotten also inspired so many of us at the games. Jessica represented Canada in the para athletics, specifically in wheelchair racing in the T53 class, which includes people with different types of disabilities, including spinal cord injuries. Jessica is an athlete with an incredible record, including medals at the 2015 Parapan American Games and the 2018 Swiss

Grand Prix. The 2020 games marked Jessica's first time at the Paralympics and her performance made Yukoners so proud. She raced in four events — the 800-, the 1,500-, and the 400-metre individual events, plus the 4 x 100 metre universal relay. Under very tough conditions, she achieved a remarkable eighth-place finish in the 400-metre individual event. She also was a key member of Canada's 4 x 100 universal relay, working with her teammates to set a new Canadian record. Well done, Jessica.

In Tokyo, Frotten and Dixon showed the world what Yukoners are made of and what we can achieve. I am so proud to see these Yukoners represent our great territory and country on the international stage. I know that they will continue to achieve so much more in years to come. I understand that Stephanie is now in pursuit of her next great achievement, a master's degree in kinesiology at the University of Toronto. There she will be working in the field of safeguarding in sport, which looks at ways to deliver sports that are inclusive, safe, and accessible for anyone who wants to participate.

I understand that Jessica, after a busy season training with more major games just around the corner, is pondering her next move while continuing her work as a transition specialist in Saskatchewan.

Whatever the future holds, I am sure that Jessica and Stephanie will continue to inspire us with their determination and courage.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Jessica Frotten and Stephanie Dixon, who represented the Yukon and Canada at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, which were held between August 24 and September 5 of this year.

First off, I would like to recognize and congratulate decorated Yukon wheelchair racer Jessica Frotten, who competed in her first Paralympic Games this year. We are so proud of Jessica's achievements over the years, and it is no surprise that her dedication to her sport has taken her as far as it has. Her strength, her determination, and her courage are an inspiration and the Yukon has been behind her 100 percent, following her long journey to the Olympics.

I would also like to offer our sincere congratulations to Stephanie Dixon, who accompanied Team Canada to Tokyo as chef de mission. Stephanie has had her share of experiences on the world stage of swimming and has medalled at three Paralympic Games between 2000 and 2008. She has been a strong presence in the parasport community around the world and has contributed greatly to the sport as a swim coach and mentor here in Whitehorse.

So, congratulations to both Jessica and Stephanie. Thank you for making Yukon proud.

Applause

Ms. White: I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate the world-class achievement of two Yukoners. Jessica Frotten and Stephanie Dixon were both in Tokyo for the 2020 Paralympic Games — one competing, as we heard, in the para

athletics and the other as the chef de mission — both powerhouses in their fields and both proudly representing the Yukon. I could share a long list of the achievements of both of these women, but that still wouldn't do them justice because each is more than her athletic abilities. They are both advocates, cheerleaders, aunties, friends, coaches, and so much more.

I am incredibly lucky to have both of these people as friends, and I wish them continued success. These two are perfect examples — that you can take a kid out of the Yukon, but you can never take the Yukon out of the kid. The Yukon is so proud of your achievements and I am so proud of the people who they are.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a letter from the First Nation Chamber of Commerce in support of the proposed better building loan program.

I also have for tabling a letter from the Yukon Federation of Labour in support of the proposed better building loan program.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I have for tabling two legislative returns related to debate on November 4 on the Yukon Housing Corporation.

Ms. White: I have for tabling a letter from the Village of Teslin against the *Municipal Act* and the *Assessment and Taxation Act* changes.

I also have for tabling a letter from the Whitehorse Fire Fighters Association in support of adding wildland firefighters to presumptive cancer coverage.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I have for tabling the Yukon Lottery Commission annual report, and I again thank Mr. Curlew for his leadership on this file.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have for tabling a letter from the Public Service Commissioner to the Yukon Employees' Union and the Yukon Teachers' Association.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?
Are there any petitions to be presented?

PETITIONS

Petition No. 7

Ms. White: I have for presentation a petition that reads:
To the Yukon Legislative Assembly:

This petition of the undersigned shows:

THAT Mayo has experienced several substance use disorder-related deaths, with many being in this past year.

THAT a response developing both short-term and long-term resources with our community leaders and health services is needed.

THAT this response needs to be immediate and specifically address community healing, harm reduction, prevention, treatment, and enforcement.

THEREFORE the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to urge the Yukon Government to declare a state of emergency in Mayo in order to deploy an immediate response and develop (with the community leaders, the Department of Health and Social Services, the Department of Justice, and any other applicable departments), trauma and culturally informed, resources in the community to address substance use.

Speaker: Are there any bills to be introduced?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Cathers: I rise today to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education to recognize the growing number of families with school-aged children in Grizzly Valley north by adding a school bus stop at Ursa Way.

Ms. White: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to formally share the contact information of independent investigator Amanda Rogers with past and current parents of students at Hidden Valley school.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to reach out and offer assistance to the Government of British Columbia during their emergency situation.

Ms. Tredger: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to increase core funding for each women's organization funded by the women's equality fund to \$85,000 per year.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Yukon 511 services

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The safety of the traveling public is a top priority for our government. The Department of Highways and Public Works maintains close to 5,000 kilometres of Yukon roads, from Watson Lake all the way to Eagle Plains and the Northwest Territories border. But drivers could still run into anything from washouts to construction to snowy and icy conditions.

We know how important it is that Yukoners are aware of any road hazards on our highways before setting out on their journey. Our plan is, as always, to get Yukoners from point A to point B safely and efficiently. This is why I am excited to

stand in this Assembly and update Yukoners on the improvements that we have made to the Yukon 511 platform.

On October 25, a new version of Yukon 511 was launched featuring a brand new mobile app and an upgraded website. With our new mobile app, getting real-time road condition information in a safe, non-distracted way is now a reality. The app features GPS route planning, advanced monitoring of route conditions, and a hands-free drive mode that reads critical alerts to drivers. The new 511 website also offers a more user-friendly experience, including a Google Maps integrated interface and the ability to create a personal user profile.

With this new modern system, users are also able to view roadside cameras to see first-hand what the road conditions are like in many areas of the Yukon before heading to their destination.

Just a few short weeks ago, the roadside cameras caught evidence of an amazing aurora show. Yukoners will have seen that in social media.

With these exciting and important upgrades, it is our hope that checking Yukon 511 becomes top of mind before Yukoners head out on their journey. What is promising is that, since the launch of the new Yukon 511, we have already seen a lot of interest in the new platform.

I am immensely proud of the progress that has been made to improving road safety in the Yukon, as these upgrades have the potential to save lives and prevent accidents and inconveniences.

I could spend a lot more time going over the new and exciting features of Yukon 511, but I think the best way to experience it is first-hand.

I urge all Yukoners to download the Yukon 511 mobile app for free from iTunes or the Google Play store.

Mr. Hassard: Road and highway safety is top of mind for Yukoners at all times of the year, but road information is especially important during the winter months. It can be a matter of life and death for rural Yukoners who travel our roadways, and we certainly appreciate the efforts of those in the Department of Highways and Public Works to get this new 511 website up and running.

We have a number of questions about the state of our highways, though. Can the minister update us on how maintenance of our highways will be affected by the vaccine mandate coming into effect at the end of this month?

The minister has mentioned that perhaps up to 10 percent of employees could be impacted, so that could mean between one and two individuals per highway maintenance camp. What plan does the government have to ensure that our highways are safe and clear of snow if a number of employees are placed on leave without pay starting next month?

As pointed out in this House on many occasions, we have brought up concerns from our constituents about the lack of brushing on some of Yukon's most travelled routes. The former Minister of Highways and Public Works announced the roadway maintenance improvement program in April 2019. That is over two years ago, and the minister said at the time — and I quote: “Within six years, we will have the entire network

done.” The department officials at the time even confirmed that contracts would be out shortly, but here we are, late in 2021, and this Liberal government is behind on this important project, because our office keeps getting complaints about the lack of brushing along major highway routes and roads in the Yukon.

The minister sent correspondence indicating that brushing contracts would be tendered in the fall and awarded in November. So, can the minister update this House on what contracts have been awarded?

I also want to point out that the 511 website is frequently advertised on the former minister's monstrous road signs that overhang Whitehorse area highways, and I won't even get into how these \$1.9-million eyesores are ridiculed by Yukoners as a waste of money. But, when we are trying to discourage distracted driving, telling people who are currently driving to visit a website is rather comical. So, will the minister instruct his department to put up actual road and weather information instead of a link to a website asking Yukoners to use their cellphone while driving?

Likewise, the budget for highway maintenance hasn't increased in years. So, can the minister indicate when the last review of the highway maintenance budget took place and if there are any plans to do so? I look forward to hearing the answers to these questions.

Ms. Tredger: So, this morning, I checked out the new 511 website and app, and I have to say that they are utterly delightful. I am maybe behind the times to just be discovering it today, but I am so happy that I know about it now. You can look at traffic cameras from Swift River all the way to the Dempster Highway. In case you are wondering, it looks like there is a blizzard going on there. It even tells you the temperature in these locations. You can see road conditions across the Yukon. You can see where and when construction is taking place. The app even gives you updates while you are driving.

Yukoners, if you have a few minutes today and want a relaxing, enjoyable activity, take a few minutes to check out 511yukon.ca. It is not disappointing, and if you are set to travel, I hope that this resource will be useful to you. Thank you so much to the people at Highways and Public Works for all your work to make this project a success. I encourage the government to communicate about this useful tool to Yukoners in as many ways as possible.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the divergent responses from the members opposite.

These are promising updates, and we hope that we will see even more people in the territory using the 511 services that will help them get to where they are going safely.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to highlight some other additions to the 511 services that came with this upgrade. The new system seamlessly connects the new digital highway signs, mentioned with much approbation by the member opposite, that are located across the territory, allowing critical road condition information to be posted visibly to the public as soon as it happens.

Plus, roadside crews can now update the 511 system from right where they are working, meaning that alerts can be posted much faster. On the website and mobile app, there is information on ferry and border crossings, as well as weight restrictions for highways.

Mr. Speaker, our government is working hard to make online services easier to access for Yukoners, and Yukon 511 is a great example of this. The easier it is to use and understand a new technology, the more likely it is for the technology to be adopted and widely used. This new 511 platform is just a jumping-off point and has the flexibility and potential to relay even more sources of information for incident reporting in the future. We will continue to look at ways that we can improve Yukon 511 and provide Yukoners with additional tools that they can use to travel safely in our territory.

Again, as I indicated, I urge all Yukoners to go to the Apple App Store or Google Play store to download the 511 Yukon app today. As winter is upon us and road conditions are subject to worsening over the following months, I want to remind Yukoners to follow speed limits, drive safely, and check road conditions before leaving. It is only through vigilance as drivers that we can ensure that we keep ourselves and those around us safe, even in the worst of conditions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I certainly look forward to continuing my fruitful conversation with the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin in future Committee of the Whole discussions.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Sexual abuse within elementary school

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, last week, the Minister of Education and the Deputy Premier held a meeting with parents at Hidden Valley Elementary School to discuss why the Liberal government did not notify parents about sexual abuse at the school. The problem is that the minister and Deputy Premier left many parents feeling worse than before the meeting started. According to CBC, one parent said that the meeting was "... set up to be very controlling of the information ... I think that set the tone of the meeting and then it went downhill from there."

Several other parents spoke to CBC about the insulting and defensive nature of the Deputy Premier's approach to parents and the fact that she still did not share with them basic information about why she did not ensure that parents were informed of these horrendous things that took place at the school when she learned about them.

Why does the Deputy Premier continue to insult parents by refusing to explain her lack of action?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Despite the insults that I think that I just heard from the member opposite — as I started out at the beginning of this legislative Sitting speaking to this very matter around such a sensitive topic of child sexual abuse that happened in our schools, I am going to continue talking with respect and with dignity toward the victims here.

There is nothing more important, Mr. Speaker, than the well-being, safety, and protection of students when they are in

our care in our schools. I have made significant commitments to the parents of Hidden Valley and to Yukoners overall to ensure that we find the answers to the questions that Yukoners have, particularly the families. We conducted, under very difficult circumstances, a planned parent meeting last week where we had to move to a virtual format. It was started out in a webinar Zoom format. We knew, at the onset, that this was not going to work, so we pivoted and changed the format to accommodate families, and I will continue building on this.

Mr. Cathers: Contrary to the minister's assertion, she is not showing respect for parents or victims, and the Deputy Premier certainly is not. In fact, they are insulting them.

According to the CBC, another parent added that the Deputy Premier's defensive approach only solidified their belief that she should resign. Another parent criticized the Liberals' approach to try to sweep this under the rug with reviews that ignore and do not investigate the Deputy Premier's actions.

To quote the parent from a CBC article: "Again, [they told us] 'Wait for the review, wait for the review.' I think that they're just kicking the can down the road — it's a tactic..."

The parent went on to say: "Why can't they tell parents, straight, what's going on? Why can't they just give the answer there and then? Why isn't it in the public's interest and the parents' interest to know what went on...?"

Since the Deputy Premier refused to provide answers to parents last week, can she answer this parent's direct question here in the Assembly today?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will continue to build on my answer around the meetings that have happened with families and the ongoing reviews or investigations. Mr. Speaker, there are four reviews, or investigations, ongoing into how the matter was handled, and we are going to get answers that families have asked for and what we all need in order to move forward in a good way.

The Yukon RCMP, last week, talked about the review that they are doing into their investigation, which is being conducted by the Major Crimes Unit from British Columbia.

The Yukon RCMP chief commanding officer shared some preliminary findings with the Department of Education on November 8, as well as parents on November 9 at the Hidden Valley parent meeting.

We are taking the time to respond to those questions, so there is a lot that we have taken action on. We have launched our own independent review of everything that has happened at Hidden Valley, including the new information around 2015-16, so there is more to come on that.

Mr. Cathers: This Liberal government continues to disrespect parents by refusing to answer questions and by reading their talking points that don't answer the question. The Deputy Premier needs to be accountable for her own role in this matter. The Minister of Education promised to provide parents with the minutes from the September 22 meeting with parents as well as the video recording of the November 9 meeting with parents that took place. As well, the government had committed to provide written answers to questions in that meeting.

Can the minister confirm if this information has been provided to parents now? If not, why is the government continuing to stonewall and prevent the release of information to parents and break their own commitments to them to provide them with this information?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will continue to talk about the actions that our government is taking. This is a very serious matter — one that I take seriously — and I continue to direct my comments to Yukoners and to family members, particularly the children who were impacted and continue to be impacted. I want to remind folks as well that there are ongoing matters before the courts now — very sensitive matters that are being looked at in various levels of court proceedings.

I have launched an independent review of the Government of Yukon's response to the situation in Hidden Valley Elementary School. This independent review will look into our internal and interdepartmental processes, and all of the questions that have been posed and that were posed at the meeting held with parents will be answered in these reviews. There are four reviews happening, and I want to address a motion that was put forward today by the Third Party around the contact information for Amanda Rogers. This information has been shared with current students and former students of Hidden Valley.

Question re: Sexual abuse within elementary school

Mr. Hassard: So, the Minister of Education has been consistently called out by stakeholders this fall for sharing inaccurate information with Yukoners. Whether this is deliberate or just a case of the minister not being aware of what her department is doing, we will leave her to explain.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that, under Standing Order 19(h), it states that we should not stand in the Legislature and charge another member with uttering a deliberate falsehood.

Speaker: The Member for Lake Laberge, on the point of order.

Mr. Cathers: My colleague just presented two possible options. He did not contravene Standing Order 19(h), as asserted by the Government House Leader.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: I did not hear the member use the words as described, and I will review Hansard and get back to this House if required. Please continue, Member for Pelly-Nisutlin.

Mr. Hassard: As I was saying, last month, when the minister made a clear statement that there were additional supports available at Hidden Valley school, as well as health and wellness resources, the Yukon Teachers' Association had to write the minister and tell her that she was wrong again.

So, after being publicly called out for providing inaccurate information, can the minister tell us if all of the promised supports are now in place at the Hidden Valley school?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Despite the insults and some of the accusations that I think I heard in the preamble to this question, I will again direct my attention to Yukoners and to families impacted by a very serious situation that happened in one of our schools.

Again, we are focused on the needed steps to rebuild trust and provide the best targeted supports to our school community.

There are four reviews ongoing. The RCMP are doing further investigation into their part in all of the matters that have happened at Hidden Valley. I want to thank — the dedicated and sincere work — of the Hidden Valley Elementary School administration and staff, who are going above and beyond their usual responsibilities to ensure that children feel well supported and safe. I attended the school and met with the administration and talked to them specifically about the questions that have been coming to me as minister in this House and from parents. I will continue to build on this answer as we move forward.

Mr. Hassard: I would like to remind the minister that this is about supports for Hidden Valley Elementary School, not about reviews.

Last month, the minister raised pretty serious expectations of additional supports for Hidden Valley school, but then, unfortunately for the minister, the YTA had to write her to correct the record. I will quote from that letter, Mr. Speaker: "It is my view that trying to make good on this promise, during a serious staffing shortage, will make the professional lives of schools Administrators and Educators untenable. The expectations of the public have been raised, but we see no plan to properly resource the solutions to meet those expectations."

Has the minister now ensured that the proper resources are in place to provide these additional supports to Hidden Valley school?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will continue on about my visit to the school. I was very pleased to visit the school and see first-hand how the staff and students are doing. It was great to see the students engaged in what they are to be doing — learning with caring educators. That is what I witnessed at the school.

To support the well-being of staff and students is a significant part of a crisis response when a serious incident has occurred at a school — is to work toward a sense of normalcy. Again, that is what I witnessed in the school. Staff at Hidden Valley school are working hard to provide students with engaging learning opportunities while still being vigilant and monitoring students who may require support and to connect them with appropriate supports.

There are many ways to ensure the safety of children, and one of them is through education. The most effective way to ensure student safety is to educate children about consent, right and wrong touch, boundaries, and who to tell when they are feeling unsafe. These are all things that are happening at Hidden Valley and at all of our schools.

I will continue to build on this answer.

Mr. Hassard: It's unfortunate that the minister won't actually talk about the question that is being asked, which is about resources for the school. Now, on one hand, we have the Minister of Education, who has found it difficult to share accurate information throughout the fall and has even admitted that she was unaware of what was happening in her own department for months. On the other hand, you have the Yukon Teachers' Association, which is very familiar with the realities on the ground for our teachers. In the letter to the minister, they highlighted that the territory's current staffing shortage will make it very difficult to ensure that the students, families, and staff at Hidden Valley school are provided the necessary supports.

Can the minister tell us if she has prioritized Hidden Valley Elementary School for teachers on call and other special educational supports?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, despite the insults that were part of that — what I heard as part of the preamble to that question — I will continue to speak to Yukoners and families. I know that the Yukon Party is working hard to spin a narrative here to Yukoners about our education system, and I want to assure that the school administration and our central facility staff are committed to working with the school community on improving safety and openness in a school setting — and also to ensure that they have the resources that they need.

I heard directly from the administration, on the day that I visited the school, about some of the pressures that they're feeling. Our assistant deputy minister, Ryan Sikkes, was at that meeting with me and has been working with the school since the beginning of the school year, and he continues to do just that.

One of the other questions that I know was part of the questions about Hidden Valley and some of the changes — and I would direct this to my colleagues in the Third Party around the installation of windows and other changes that were expected to be made, and they are done. They are complete.

Question re: Faro community support services

Ms. White: Earlier this week, the Minister of Health and Social Services was asked about the lack of mental health support in the community of Faro. Instead of sharing how residents of Faro can get help, she said — and I quote: "I urge members of this Legislative Assembly to provide accurate information to Yukoners..."

Mr. Speaker, the information was accurate. This morning on CBC, a Faro resident said that she sent that very same e-mail last week to the minister — the e-mail that was quoted. So, I am going to quote from that e-mail again, directly: "Faro has inadequate mental health and substance use services. The HUB worker is based in Carmacks and is required to cover the four communities of Carmacks, Pelly Crossing, Faro, and Ross River. There is no way one person can provide enough support to four communities."

On top of this, the social worker who worked in Faro was recalled to Whitehorse. When will the minister start taking the mental health crisis in Faro seriously and provide adequate support to that community?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I thank the member opposite for the question. Our thoughts are with the people of Faro and especially the families of the victims. We are committed to providing the supports to the people of Faro that they need. I have now had an opportunity to review the e-mail that was sent on November 9. I think that it was the same day that the questions were asked. I have also reviewed an e-mail, or a letter, sent to the Premier on similar topics.

To review the background, we coordinated an inter-agency response to provide comprehensive supports to the people of Faro. Family and Children's Services have been working with the Department of Education staff to provide crisis response supports to students and families at Del Van Gorder School. Victim Services and Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services are providing counselling and immediate assistance to the community.

But let's be clear: If those services are not sufficient at this time, we will redeploy those. I look forward to answering further questions.

Ms. White: It goes along the line that thoughts and prayers just aren't enough when we are looking for fundamental changes.

It is not just in Faro that mental health is at a crisis point. Mayo has lost many community members to tragic and preventable deaths. Today, we tabled a petition from Mayo residents. They are asking for resources to support community healing, harm reduction, prevention, treatment, and enforcement, and they are urging the government to declare a state of emergency in Mayo and to deploy an immediate response to the substance abuse and mental health crisis in their community. This is urgently needed.

Does the minister understand the urgency of the situation in Mayo, and what is being done to support this community right now?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you again for the question. The petition that was tabled today with respect to the issues in Mayo is something that has come previously to my attention. As a result of seeing that document and the information sent forward to the government, I have spoken to the Mayor of Mayo about this particular situation. I have spoken to the chief. I have spoken to community activists who have brought forward this petition already. I have made our commitment to support the town of Mayo and frankly, Mr. Speaker, all of the communities of the Yukon that are hurting now as a result of the opioid crisis as a result of this tragedy in Faro and as a result of the COVID-19 concerns for everyone's issues and mental health.

Absolutely I recognize the issues in Mayo. Absolutely it is a conversation that sparked a detailed and extensive conversation at the recent Yukon Forum. This is something that we are working on with community chiefs, community First Nations, governments, and community governments because it is something that we are all responsible for here in the territory, and solutions must be found to meet community needs.

Ms. White: Substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health crises, suicide, and a housing crisis — these are all realities from Old Crow to Watson Lake and Beaver Creek to

Ross River and every community in between. Yet positions at health centres remain unfilled, schools don't have teachers or full-time counsellors, and youth programs are often lacking. The government's solution has been to have communities, which are hundreds of kilometres away from each other, share the same mental health worker. Even worse, the minister said that any individual who is seeking support can call Victim Services, and then she gave us a phone number. Mr. Speaker, our communities are suffering now and a phone number isn't enough.

What concrete steps is the minister taking to immediately address the mental health and substance use crises that are plaguing all of Yukon's communities?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question because it is what I have just been addressing — the crises in communities across the territory and the requirement of services. Our government can, and will, do better. We have set up community hubs, and certainly, while they are not responsive to every community's needs, they are progress. They are one step in the direction of better services for Yukon communities.

We have gone from two mental health workers for the entirety of rural Yukon to the five community hubs, including Whitehorse and including 21 community mental health workers. Is that enough, Mr. Speaker? No, it's not enough. We do need to address these issues in communities. We need to work with communities. We need to work with First Nation governments, with community governments, to determine what each and every community needs, and those needs are specific to that community. There is not a band-aid. There is not one solution that fits all.

We are committed to doing this work. We will absolutely work with communities going forward, and that's what we have committed to doing, not only here, but in individual conversations at the Yukon Forum. The necessity of addressing these very serious issues that have been brought forward by the member opposite is a priority for us going forward.

Question re: COVID-19 vaccine and safety measures

Ms. Clarke: I have a question about the government's proof of vaccination system. In a press release last week, the government announced that designated settings that require proof of vaccination include a range of businesses, but one that stood out to us was hair salons and barbershops. We noted that these types of businesses were not included in the proof of vaccination requirement systems in BC and other jurisdictions in western Canada.

Can the government explain why they are taking a different approach than British Columbia when it comes to hair salons?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First, I want to thank the Yukon chamber and the Whitehorse chamber for spending some time with us last night. Directly after we finished here in the Assembly, I had the opportunity to reach out to businesses that were most affected, really focused in on the hospitality industry — where there have been some major impacts — and folks who are also hosting events. That goes right down to caterers and to

the folks who are doing sound for the events and personal services.

We have taken our recommendations from the chief medical officer of health. This is something where, within this period of 21 days, we feel that a circuit breaker is required, and through those directions that have come through the Department of Health and Social Services — as well as other departments — it was identified that personal services —

The commitment that I made to the individuals who were on our call last night was that we would work through the Department of Economic Development and the chambers to see, first of all, if there are tools that we can give them, because it has been challenging. What we have heard is that individuals whom they have been asking for ID have not — it hasn't been the most pleasant of experiences, and their staff needs the support. That's the first thing. We have to be able to support them through the chambers. Secondly, in some cases, there has been — I'll leave it until the next question.

Question re: Rural fire protection services

Mr. Istchenko: Whether it was a tragedy in Keno late last year or the recent fire that struck a constituent of mine in Destruction Bay, there has been growing concern about the state of rural fire protection. Earlier this year, the former Minister of Community Services launched a review of fire services to study the current state of rural fire services in the Yukon.

The tender document for the RFP indicated that the final report and recommendations would be provided to the Yukon government on September 1, but on Monday, the minister said that the Outside contractor had still not completed the report. Can the minister tell us why this report has been delayed so significantly and when we can expect to see it?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I can say that the delivery of fire services in Yukon's unincorporated communities is challenging, given our remote and small population base. It is a challenge to recruit and retain volunteers and to maintain the necessary levels of training and certification to ensure the health and safety of our volunteers. That has certainly been the experience of our government over the last several years, and I know it has been a long-standing problem within the territory.

The independent review is in the final stages of review — examining the current model. It will examine the current model for the provision of rural fire services across the territory, and I look forward to the improvement-focused recommendations that will come from this review. I spoke to the community of Keno, and I was up in Destruction Bay. I have been to other communities — Pelly — and they were very excited and have engaged, through the review process, and are looking forward to the recommendations. I am more than happy to share that document publicly as soon as its recommendations have been presented formally and are ready to go out.

Mr. Istchenko: Can the minister confirm that this review will involve all Yukon communities? That would definitely include meetings with residents of Destruction Bay and the north Alaska Highway.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The expert contractor whom we have hired — who is very well regarded and has had conversations throughout the territory already — has drawn upon the expertise of territorial fire chiefs, fire service members, community members, and community leaders, and we thank everyone who took the time to participate.

He was up here in September and October. I know that he had a gruelling schedule. You have heard the range of people he saw in that very short period of time. He has turned his report around extremely quickly. I expect to be able to present to the Yukon public in a very short period of time.

Firefighting is a dangerous profession. Occupational health and safety requirements are set out by the act and regulations, and it is simply not lawful to place individuals in a fire situation with equipment that they are not trained or certified to operate. This creates real challenges in places like Keno or in Destruction Bay where we have no volunteers currently, so we have to make sure that the people who are in the region know how to operate the gear that we provide.

Through this review, we are going to find alternatives so that people in the territory can actually fight fires, perhaps with lesser training. I will continue later.

Question re: School zone safety

Ms. Van Bibber: On June 2 of this year, the Yukon government, City of Whitehorse, and Government of Canada announced \$820,000 of infrastructure funding for several safety improvements in school zones throughout Whitehorse. I would like to ask for updates on several of the projects that were announced.

First of all, the news release said that changes were coming to the Holy Family Elementary School drop-off area. The release said that the mini roundabout at Wann Road and Basswood Street would be built to calm traffic and encourage student drop-off on the north side.

Can the minister tell us the status of that project?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: If I can't provide the information with respect to some of the specific inquiries today, I will certainly get back to the member opposite. Of the three projects that I am aware of, my most recent briefing on the Holy Family project was that those improvements to the parking, entrance, and exit areas are complete. I will certainly provide additional detail if there are some deficiencies or if additional work is required.

I also received fantastic reports from Christ the King Elementary School in Riverdale, which now has improved parking and access for teachers and drop-off and pick-up improvements for parents and students. I certainly heard about that at Christ the King Elementary over the course of three or four years. That project is finished now, with good reports back. I will certainly meet with Christ the King Elementary School Council in the near future to get an update.

The other one that I am aware of is Golden Horn school where there were also significant improvements to the entrance, exit, and the parking areas there.

If I missed one, I will certainly get back to the member opposite.

Ms. Van Bibber: Another project that was committed to this summer was the crosswalk at Takhini school, which included enhanced zebra marks on the pavement of Range Road, as well as curb extensions at the crosswalk to calm traffic, reduce crossing distance, and improve sightlines. I know that Range Road is becoming more and more busy with development going on in that area.

What is the status of that project, and when should we expect to see the work begin?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite.

Of course, the problem with Range Road is that it is a bit of a thoroughfare. I know that we have provided, whether through my department, the City of Whitehorse, or the RCMP — there have been initiatives there to provide indicators as to the speed at which Whitehorse or Yukon motorists are travelling along Range Road. So, it certainly is an area of concern. The safety of our students and of all Whitehorse and Yukon residents is paramount.

With respect to the specific question on the Takhini crosswalk improvements and work that was contracted for the curbside improvements, I will return to the member opposite with an update on that project.

Ms. Van Bibber: I would also like to ask about the project at Elijah Smith school. The news release said that the enhanced zebra markings would be painted on the pavement at the east-west pedestrian crossing at the Hamilton Boulevard and McIntyre Drive roundabout, in front of Elijah Smith school.

Can the minister please provide more information about the status of that project? Has the work been started or is it underway, and when can we expect it to be complete?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I will certainly return to the member opposite with an update on that. I have an inkling that this might be a City of Whitehorse project, but if it is not, I will certainly return to the member opposite with an update.

Briefly, with respect to Elijah Smith school, the Yukon government is excited to be moving forward with key actions for renewable energy at that school, including the installation of a new biomass heating system. At the Elijah Smith Elementary School, the biomass system will offset the building's propane use, reducing emissions by an estimated 130 tonnes each year.

There is exciting work being done at Elijah Smith school. If the improvements that the Member for Porter Creek North is asking about — with respect to the Hamilton Boulevard roundabout area in front of Elijah Smith — are a Highways and Public Works project, I will report back to the member and to the House. As I said, I believe that it might be a City of Whitehorse project, but thank you.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed. We will proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 217

Clerk: Motion No. 217, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT this House supports the recommendations made by the acting chief medical officer of health that include vaccine mandates and proof of vaccination to access non-essential services.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'm going to begin today by talking about Dr. Catherine Elliott. I met Dr. Elliott last year in early March. At that time, I had the role of being responsible for the Arctic Winter Games. I was the Minister of Community Services, and Dr. Elliott came to speak to me and to the Minister of Health and Social Services at that time, and she let us know that she was recommending that we cancel the Arctic Winter Games.

I want to give a bit of an explanation about what happened over the next few days and also try to take us back to the context of that decision because I think that it's relevant for the motion that we have in front of us right now.

At that time when Dr. Elliott came to speak to me, I have to say that I was quite skeptical. I thought to myself: No, this can't be right; we can't be cancelling the games because of the risk of COVID. Then when she presented to us, she said that she didn't actually believe that COVID would necessarily hit.

The challenge, as she described it to us, was that, if there was an athlete who had a cough, we would have to — because of COVID in Canada and the world — isolate that whole team and any trainers or chaperones who were with that team. We would have to isolate the whole team. Each one of those team members would need separate washrooms. Then, if a second team got a cough, you would have to isolate that team.

One of the things that we were talking about is pertussis — I more commonly refer to it as whooping cough — but even a flu. Say there was an athlete who had a cough. I think that is probably at every games that I can think of. The challenge was that it would become overwhelming but, through an abundance of precaution and safety, we would have to do this isolation.

From there, we alerted the city. We alerted the Arctic Winter Games president. Very quickly, there was a decision taken on behalf of the hosts. It wasn't an order from the acting chief medical officer of health; it was from the games organizers to say that we were cancelling the games. We went out and talked to the public about that. It was a press conference here. I think it was on March 7 when we cancelled the games. The outcry from the athletes, the teams, the parents, the families, and everybody was pretty strong that it was the wrong decision. That we were being overly cautious is what I heard.

I think that we announced that on the Saturday and, on the Sunday, I asked Dr. Elliott to please come and talk to the organizers of the games — to the board, to the society, and to the people who were part of the organization of the event. I was

impressed. I wondered how she was going to explain this. She's a very matter-of-fact person, and she shared that it wasn't what she wanted. She shared that this isn't where she hoped that things would go, but rather that it was the necessary thing in order to protect the safety of the public.

Just today in this Legislature, I heard us talk about safety around school crossings, around 511, around Hidden Valley school, around Faro, and around Mayo.

I have heard us talk about it in a variety of contexts, and it is amazing to me how much we need to focus on the issue of safety — how important it is for all leaders and all governments to make sure that people are safe. I was impressed with Dr. Elliott's ability to talk to the public. In this case, it was the Arctic Winter Games folks, but she explained in a very matter-of-fact way what was going on and why this was the case. Thankfully, we all got behind that decision.

A lot of people thought it was the wrong decision for about one week. Then one week later, we saw all the national sports leagues cancelling, and other big sporting events cancelling, and COVID started to move through. By the time we got to when the games would have been held, there were people writing to us saying that they had bought tickets and were going to come, but they now had COVID. They would have been here. It was before they had been identified as having COVID, but then they would have been travelling with COVID. It would have been — well, we talk about these super-spreader types of events. Who knows whether it would or would not have been, but I think, in that moment, everyone thought that it was the right choice. I heard a lot of people get on board and say, "Of course."

That is the challenge. The challenge is that you have to make the decision in the moment with the information that you have in front of you without the ability to go forward in time and look backward and see whether or not it was the right decision. But you have to take it, because there is just a moment of time in which to take those decisions. We are there again, right now, in these last several weeks. That is why I have put this motion in front of us. It is to ask us, as leaders in this Legislature — I know that the government has the responsibility to take this decision, but I also understand, from all the conversations that I've had in this Legislature, that it is good to hear from all leaders to see where they stand on this type of issue.

What is in front of us is a choice — a very, very hard choice, and I'm going to talk about it a little bit — which is: Do we choose on the side of safety to protect public health, or do we protect the rights of individuals to make their own personal health choices? That is a hard decision. I defy anyone to take this role and to think that these are easy decisions. They are super hard decisions, and I'm going to talk about the challenges that these decisions mean for individuals and how tough it is for them. I am going to try to acknowledge that it is not easy to take the decision and that there are heartfelt thoughts on all sides of this debate and that ultimately where we have landed is to try to protect public health, because that is the advice we got.

Again, it turns out that it is from Dr. Catherine Elliott. It was she who came to us and said, hey, the problem right now is that we are in a wave of the Delta variant. We have seen it hit in Alaska; we have seen it hit in NWT — or, seeing it hit — and seeing it hit in British Columbia. That is on all three sides of us. She expressed her concern to us that the signs were that it was starting to build, and so, she gave us a recommendation to say that we should bring in place both a requirement for vaccines for the public service and to require, for Yukoners to take part in non-essential activities, that they show proof of vaccination — two very big steps.

What we chose to do — we got together very quickly, as a government, and we said, okay, do we support these recommendations? We said yes, and we asked Dr. Elliott to stand up in front of the public the next morning to say this and to explain that we were going to get there, but that we still had to work through a few issues, or many issues, because there is a lot of detail there to sort through, but we alerted the public to where we wanted to head, where we had decided to head, and we said, okay, over the next little while, we are going to work to make this happen, and there are some things to sort through.

Now, I want to say that, when we made that choice, that decision, that we were going to support the recommendations that came from Dr. Elliott, and that we also, of course, supported her telling the public what those recommendations were directly, we did not know, at that moment, that we were about to get hit with a wave. We understood that cases were creeping up, but we didn't understand that it was basically there, because what Dr. Elliott has said to me over the past year and a half is that, when you see the cases in the public, often they have been spreading in the week, or weeks, before.

So, it turns out that, as we were taking that decision, we were starting to head toward our first instance of community spread here in the territory, but we took the decision, because we were advised that the public health was at risk.

When I say “the public health”, what I am talking about is not just people having COVID. I am talking about our health care system and its ability to withstand the cases that are coming. The ICU beds, the emergency department, the hospital, our nursing stations across the territory — all of it together, including our mental wellness hubs. All of that health care system, we were told, could be threatened if a lot of cases rose suddenly, and what we needed to do was to try to stop that, and these were the two recommendations.

We talked right away with the unions to let them know, and we heard back from the Yukon Employees' Union. They said to us, within that first week, “Look, we support the vaccine mandate” — for which I want to say thank you to them and to the Yukon Teachers' Association. Both of them have stated throughout that they support the vaccine mandate, but they asked whether we could have testing as an alternative for vaccinations — testing and personal protective equipment instead of vaccinations for those people who did not wish to get vaccinated.

So, what we did is that we turned back, because that's a medical question. I'm not a medical professional — and certainly not in this role should I be making any medical

judgments. I want to hear from the experts, and our experts are the chief medical officer of health.

I want to explain to Yukoners, just for a moment, that it's not a single person — of course, Dr. Elliott is the face of that, and today it was Dr. Corriveau, whom I have not had the opportunity to meet, but I'm sure I will. There is an office with several physicians who are part of it and several support staff, and they work together. I also know that this chief medical officer of health office works in connection with the other chief medical officer of health offices across the provinces and territories and also works with the Canadian office and the Public Health Agency of Canada. There is a network of expertise which we draw from, and we are given this advice.

Today, I tabled a letter to the unions from yesterday. When we first met with the Yukon Employees' Union, they said: “How about we use testing and personal protective equipment instead of vaccinations for those people who are concerned about getting vaccinated?”

We turned to get that medical advice from Dr. Elliott and her office, and she let us know. I tabled part of that letter. She wrote to us a couple of weeks ago. I am going to quote from that today just a bit. I will quote from two sections. “Testing is insufficient to support the policy goals. It will not increase vaccine rates. On the contrary, it is likely to decrease vaccine rates. It has limited ability to protect those at risk from transmission. It shifts the burden from the individual to the public health system.”

Now I am quoting from just a little further down in the document that I tabled today: “... vaccination is the better option from a public health perspective. Vaccination reduces the risk of contracting and spreading the virus. Vaccination reduces the number of clusters, outbreaks and overall case counts; it also reduces the severity of disease overall; this in turn reduces the burden on both the public and acute care health systems. This allows the health system to provide care for patients whose care has been deferred or affected by the pandemic.”

That was the advice we got. The advice was very clear. Later on, in just one more very short quote: “The a/CMOH does NOT recommend testing as substitute for vaccination.”

We, of course, alerted the unions that we had gotten that advice and now we have shared across the written version of it, and here we are.

We state that we are following the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health. Sometimes I understand that we say that a lot. I think, though, that it is fair to say that we say it a lot because we have done it consistently. Back when we started and we got a recommendation to cancel the Arctic Winter Games, reluctantly, sadly, we cancelled the games. Of course, later on, everyone said that, yes, of course, that was the right thing to do. But at the time, that was not the situation. Here we are again. We are being given advice, as a government, and we are asked to make the decision as a government.

We have let the public know that this is what we are going to do. After the unions asked us whether we could use testing as an alternative, we asked for that medical advice again, and we were told pretty clearly that, no, it is not a good idea. We

turned around and let the unions know that, so, we've said that no, we are not going to use testing.

Of course, there is still testing in the territory. We heard yesterday, when we were talking about Whitehorse Elementary School, that the chief medical officer of health and her team did testing for the school. That is okay — terrific — but I'm talking about testing instead of vaccinations.

One of the things that seems to come up here that I've heard over the last several days is: What is going to happen? Because we bring in this policy or regulation and say that it is a requirement that you have to be vaccinated with your first dose by November 30 and your second dose by January 30 — if members of the public service choose not to be vaccinated or not to share their personal health information, we will then put them on leave without pay?

Some of the media and the members opposite have asked: What are you going to do if you lose some staff members? What will happen to the services that you need to provide? The question that I never hear is: What would we do if we didn't do this? What would we do if we didn't decide to address the wave that is coming and COVID washed through? I will talk about that a bit more, but say it did shut down our hospital. What would we do?

It isn't just what would we do if we lose some of our employees — we anticipate that some will choose to go on leave without pay. We anticipate that, but if you're saying that we shouldn't do this, which is what this whole motion is about today, then you need to say what you would do about the wave.

By the way, when we first brought this in and first asked the chief medical officer of health for her advice around testing as an alternative for leave without pay and we heard that back, it was virtually the next weekend that what we saw was not three cases a day, but it was 30 cases a day. Suddenly, the wave hit.

That introduces a large amount of stress for everyone — for parents of kids at school, for our plow drivers, and for the people at the front of this building here, who greet people who come in. When that wave hits, we all get worried, and this is our second wave. When the first wave hit, we were just — vaccines were coming up in the Yukon, and that is what helped us through that wave. Now, we have a new variant, the Delta variant, and we have a wave. Even though the vaccine rates for the Yukon are extremely high — as the Minister of Highways and Public Works said the day before last — I think that he said that the current vaccination rate for adults over 18 and above, for their first vaccine, is at 90 percent, but we know that there are more people coming in every day to get vaccinated. That is high for Canada, and yet, we can see that it is not high enough to stop a wave.

I heard Dr. Elliott on the radio last week. She was on the morning show, just after all of that wave had hit, and we decided to, again, declare a state of emergency so that we could very quickly try to put a circuit breaker in place to address this wave — recalling that the decisions about mandatory vaccines that we took before that wave hit — and then, when it hit we were like, oh, thank goodness we took that advice, that we didn't decide to say at that point, no, we don't want to take that

advice, because imagine if we hadn't — the system could overwhelm.

I listened to Dr. Elliott talk on the radio. There are a couple of things that I just want to point out that she said, because I think that the host — I think it was Elyn Jones that morning who asked her, well, you know, there are people who are vaccinated who are getting COVID. To which, Dr. Elliott said, yes, there are, but, of course, there are way more people who are vaccinated — nine times more adults have had their first shot than one out of 10 that have not. There are many more people who are vaccinated, so, to say that some of the vaccinated people have been getting COVID is correct, but she pointed out that the serious health outcomes for those people who are unvaccinated were 50 times worse than for those people who are vaccinated. This is why, I believe, she is giving us this advice, to say, no, you need to protect the public health in this instance.

Just for a second, what I want to say is that we're not the first jurisdiction to get here. We're the twelfth — or thirteenth, if you want to count Canada; it's just Nunavut that isn't here. Everybody else has gotten here. This is a critical issue; it's a very tough question. We got here, even though we have great vaccination rates — but we are being told that we need higher in order for public health to be protected.

The next morning — I think on the Tuesday morning after Dr. Elliott was on after the state of emergency was declared, I heard Dr. Warshawski, who is the president of the Yukon Medical Association, get on the radio and talk to Yukoners as well. I listened intently to his radio interview and basically he talked about the pressure that was mounting on our acute health care system right now. He said that one of the things that is happening is, because we have a lot of COVID coming through our hospital, that exposure, over time — enough exposure — the staff are getting COVID. So, we're losing the staff — some of the staff — to COVID. Then I think he said that three of the four intensive care unit beds were taken up with COVID patients and basically, when you get three out of the four, it's now a COVID unit or ward — basically, anyone who is in there is going to be exposed.

His request to us as Yukoners was to please get vaccinated. He was very supportive. He said, from the hospital's perspective, that this was a necessary thing. I thank him for that.

Here's one of the things that I have often wondered. I have heard the members of the Official Opposition stand often and talk — even yesterday — and say how important it is to listen to doctors and how important it is to support the doctors here in the territory. I'm looking forward to hearing their debate today because I'm telling them — and I have tabled today the advice from our chief medical officer of health, Dr. Elliott. She is giving us very clear advice. Her recommendation is that we introduce vaccine requirements for the public service, that we do not use testing as an alternative, and that we require proof of vaccination for non-essential services across the public. We are working toward that. I am asking myself whether the Official Opposition will support these doctors. They often talk about the importance of supporting doctors and I wait to hear where they are going to land with that.

I want to talk for a minute about how challenging this decision is. I spent the weekend talking with people who have chosen not to be vaccinated and I want to talk now for a moment to those Yukoners who have chosen to get vaccinated and if they are talking with or about those people who are not vaccinated. I hope that we do that with respect and kindness. These are hard, hard decisions for people. They are very heartfelt choices for folks. If they are choosing to not be vaccinated and if they are willing to take leave without pay instead of that, you know that it's a big deal for them and their families. I think that we need to please do our best to be respectful around folks for those decisions. They have told me that they have felt a lot of not just criticism, but even shaming. I just want to say that we need to treat each other with kindness in the territory.

On the other side of it, I have also known — and we have heard about this — my wife is a nurse and she teaches at the university. She is there with some of the people who work in the vaccine clinic here. Those nurses who are doing the vaccine clinic have said that there are members of the public who have been really harsh toward those people who are providing that service. So, I am asking those who are on the side of not being supportive of being vaccinated to please be kind and respectful toward our public service as well — the folks who are there trying to help them.

This is where the choice and decision about these things comes to government. Clearly, we have taken the decision that we believe that we have to show leadership on this issue. When I think back to the past year and a half and how we are doing as a territory, I think that the decisions we have taken so far have been very, very good decisions. I understand that we are in the middle of a wave right now, but when I look to see how the Yukon has fared compared to other jurisdictions — even around issues like mental health and stuff like that — I feel we have done better. I'm not trying to just give a pat on the back to the government; I'm talking about us a territory, working together through a very hard situation.

I am saying that our choice as a government is to maintain our focus on protecting the health and safety of Yukoners, so that when we get that advice from the chief medical officer of health or the acting chief medical officer of health — she is telling us that it is important that we avoid the spread of COVID-19, that we as a government take on those decisions and that we as an employer lead by example and that we do that despite the fact that we cannot have certainty about these choices. We have to take a decision by weighing risks.

Let me just finish by coming back to Dr. Elliott. I know that this is a hard decision, because I understand how much is in the balance for Yukoners. We took that decision with a lot of care and consideration — but it was clear for us, ultimately. It was clear because the advice given to us was clear, which was that our public health was at risk and we needed to protect it.

We have taken that decision. We want to ascertain today whether all members of this Legislature believe that or if they have a different perspective — if they think that it should be different. I have heard suggestions a couple times that “other jurisdictions are doing this,” and I think, great — those

jurisdictions have their own context and their own chief medical officers of health and their own epidemiology that's at work.

So, we have asked for the advice here from our professionals, who — I just want to say — have done an amazing job during the pandemic. It has been a hard go, from day one to whatever day we are today. I'm sure it's over 500 days. They have done their utmost at all times to provide us the best advice they can based on the situation that is here in the Yukon. We have decided to follow that and we're asking whether our colleagues here in the Legislature support that.

Mr. Dixon: It is surprising to us that the government has brought this motion forward today. Since the announcement of the implementation of a vaccine mandate and vaccine passport system for the Yukon back on October 15, it has become apparent to just about every individual, every business, every NGO, the biggest public sector unions, and every other level of government in this territory that the Liberal government simply does not have a plan for this.

To quote my colleague, the Leader of the Third Party, last week in debating the ministerial statement about this very topic, she said — and I quote: “Yukoners are looking for leadership, and right now, it's hard to find.” Quite frankly, I agree very much. It has been a stunning failure of leadership on the part of the Premier, the Deputy Premier, and their Cabinet.

They made this announcement and have since struggled to provide even the most basic details and implementation plan. They have disregarded the pleas of many Yukoners for some modicum of consultation, and quite frankly, this announcement has been handled extremely poorly by the Liberal government. So, it is bizarre that they would bring forward a government motion on it — even more so because they must know how it's going to end. All three political parties have made their positions very clear already. We have said that we disagree with the approach the Liberals are taking. We have expressed our position repeatedly in the Legislature, in the media, and in direct communication with Yukoners. We know where the government stands, we know our position, and we know the NDP's position.

So, it's clear to us that this motion was brought about for no other reason but to delay getting to debate on other pressing matters, such as the departments of Education and Health and Social Services as well as the several pieces of legislation on the floor.

Motion to adjourn debate

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I move that debate on this motion be now adjourned.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition that debate be now adjourned.

Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Disagree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 11 yeas, seven nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion to adjourn debate on Motion No. 217 agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. Blake): Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Chair: Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 202: Second Appropriation Act 2021-22 — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Women and Gender Equity Directorate

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would like to start by welcoming our officials to the Legislative Assembly today to assist in the budget debate on the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. I would like to start with our Deputy Minister, Nicole Morgan, and our director of Women and Gender Equity Directorate, Hillary Aitken. Thank you so much for being here and for assisting us today to help bring forward full and complete answers to questions that members may have.

Today, I am very pleased to present the Women and Gender Equity Directorate supplementary budget for 2021-22. This budget is reflective of the work of the Women and Gender Equity Directorate — what we undertake with our partners in order to advance gender equity throughout the Yukon. This department is small but mighty in the work that they do. We have recently updated the name and formal mandate of the directorate to better reflect the important work done to advocate for women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals.

The directorate remains committed to supporting and advocating for women and girls, working toward the elimination of gender-based violence, and supporting the government's efforts to integrate a gender and diversity lens on all decision making. We have now expanded the formal mandate to intentionally include sexual orientation. The new name and formal mandate also align with the understanding that gender is on a spectrum. There was a very small cost to changing the directorate's name, which was covered within the existing budget.

Our government is committed to furthering the equality of all citizens and ensuring that we all have the opportunity to lead healthy, safe, and fulfilling lives. The budget line items that I will discuss ensure that key projects in the community can be carried out.

I would like to begin by highlighting some of those key projects and recent successes. It was very exciting to announce the LGBTQ2S+ inclusion action plan this past summer. This action plan paves a path forward to end discrimination and improve inclusivity, both within Government of Yukon services and also for the Yukon government as an employer. It includes over 100 action items representing programs and services in several key departments across government.

I would like to highlight one action item in particular: work with the LGBTQ2S+ community organizations toward the Pride Centre. A physical space was one of the top priorities that the LGBTQ2S+ community shared with us during our public engagement. It was an important action for Yukon government to support. We were told that having a physical space that can be used as a gathering place for education, programming, resources, and a place for community and connection should be a priority. That is why we are providing \$375,000 in operational funding for Queer Yukon Society to support the establishment of the Pride Centre — the first ever in Yukon.

The opening of the Yukon's very first Pride Centre is a historic milestone that the LGBTQ2S+ community can be very proud of. We are pleased to work in partnership with all LGBTQ2S+ organizations in Yukon to help make the centre a

reality. Queer Yukon is in the new space, and renovations are underway. They are now navigating when to open their doors more publicly and begin programming while maintaining COVID precautions.

I am proud that our government is committed to inclusiveness, equity, and respect for diversity of all Yukoners. This is a major step on the journey toward a more inclusive society.

We know that we are still seeing the effects of the shadow, or echo, pandemic happening across Canada, even here in the Yukon. The long-term mental health impacts of COVID-19 on people are not yet fully understood.

The pandemic has had an even greater impact on the safety and security of populations who may be marginalized or face barriers to equality, including women, girls, and two-spirit-plus people. While public health measures are necessary to keep us safe, they can sometimes have unintended consequences. Unfortunately, home is not always a safe place for everyone. Many people are struggling to connect with important services, sometimes to even meet their basic needs like shelter or food.

As Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, I am so grateful for the grassroots work of local Yukon organizations that create and run programs such as Sally and Sisters. That is why I am pleased that, this year, the Women and Gender Equity Directorate will be providing an increase in funding of \$65,000 to the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council to continue the Sally and Sisters program. This funding will support the expansion of services from twice a week to four times a week. We are working in partnership with the Government of Canada on this project to support this important work. This funding for 2021-22 is recoverable from the Department of Women and Gender Equality Canada. Sally and Sisters is a critical service for so many women and children in our community. It has been in operation in Whitehorse for nearly 10 years, providing a safe environment to meet emergency needs for food security. Just as important, it provides a safe and sober environment for women and children to access peer support, referrals to services, and navigation of services. These are fundamental needs. These are not luxuries.

As Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, I am so grateful for the grassroots work of the local organizations that create and run programs such as Sally and Sisters. We will continue to work with local equality-seeking organizations to increase accessibility to other sources of funding and to build opportunities for further collaboration.

At this point, I will end my opening comments and look to my colleagues from the Official Opposition and Third Party to pose questions. I know that we haven't had a lot of time — or not a lot of questions have come throughout this Sitting so far around women and gender equity, so I am very pleased to speak about these matters today that are so vital to the well-being of our Yukon Territory.

Ms. Clarke: I would like to thank officials for their work within the directorate and for being here today. I have a few questions for the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. I understand that the minister may not have the answers to these questions at this moment, so I am

going to ask them all together and would appreciate a legislative return with the answers if she is not able to provide them here today.

I have heard concerns from women's groups that the expansion from the Women's Directorate to the Women and Gender Equity Directorate may somehow dilute the focus on women's issues within the directorate. I have been asked to have the minister confirm that women's issues will remain a priority for the directorate and that funding levels will not be negatively impacted for women's groups.

I am hoping that the minister responsible can provide an update to the House on the Monday review for the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues, as well as the status of appointing sufficient members to the board.

For my final question, I understand that the Yukon Status of Women Council is the lowest funded NGO of all those supported by the directorate. Does the directorate have any plans to ensure that they receive funding equivalent to other organizations?

Thank you again to the minister and to the officials.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to stand and speak about the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. First, I will start by just speaking about the name and formal mandate change in order to reflect the important work of advocating and supporting women and people of all genders and sexual orientation.

The Women's Directorate will now, of course, be known and is now known as the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. This change better reflects the current scope of work of the directorate and the community that it works with. It also reflects our understanding of gender beyond binary definitions of "male" and "female". The directorate remains so committed to supporting and advocating for women and girls, supporting women's organizations, and working toward the elimination of gender-based violence. I recognize that this is potentially what I'm taking from the member opposite as the primary concern that she is presenting here today.

I have certainly met with equality-seeking groups, including women's groups, to talk about the mandate change and to assure them that there is still much work to be done in order to seek further equality for women, girls, and two-spirit-plus people in our Yukon Territory. This is work that has been happening for decades and decades, and we still have a long journey ahead of us. It is one that we are very committed to.

I just want to say to the member opposite and to Yukoners that this mandate change is actually very much a reflection of the work that the previous Women's Directorate had been doing for a number of years — approximately 10 years. It certainly has been part of the mandate that I received when I became the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate back in 2016. We have made huge advancements. I talked about that in my opening comments. We have done work that has never been done in our territory. First of all, we did the very first consultation with the LGBTQ2S+ community in the history of the Yukon. We created and took that work and worked with the community to create an action plan that, again, had never existed.

Just reflecting on the questions at hand, I think that there is some indication — and maybe some tone — in the question asked around the funding. We have also now provided funding to Queer Yukon for the formation of the Pride Centre, and I can assure you that those are new dollars; that is why we are here. It is part of the supplementary budget to allocate those dollars to Queer Yukon for the establishment of the Pride Centre and for the important programming that they will be doing. This funding certainly is not taking away from any of the existing equality-seeking groups.

I will come back to the budget question — because the member posed all her questions at once, I will skip around a little bit — but I am going to go back to the YACWI — the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues. I want to start by saying how much we value the recommendations that the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues has provided to the Government of Yukon since its inception in 1992. Again, however, so much has changed in the last 30 years, including the scope and capacity of the directorate — as I have just spoken about — the emergence of equality-seeking community organizations and other understandings of gender. I mean, back 30 years ago — when you think back, we did not have equality-seeking groups like we have today. We have several that have different mandates and some that kind of overlap with each other as well. So, in recognition of this, we have updated — of course, we have talked about that today — the name and mandate. The plan is also to update the mandate of the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues, which would require legislative change. I have worked with the council members to review the function and focus of the advisory council in the current Yukon context and we gathered input from women's organizations, the LGBTQ2S+ organizations, and current and past advisory council members, and this is informing our next steps.

The member also mentioned in their questioning the current makeup of that council, and we have continued to advertise and recruit to bring expertise and good representation to the council that is reflective of the current makeup of the council, which includes rural members as well as diversity. These have been some of the challenges. I have a number of applications now and have made some decisions just recently. I will be seeking out the acceptance of those positions in the days to come. We will ensure that folks are aware of that.

I am excited about the new members who are coming on board and what they will bring to this advisory committee as we transition into this next stage and the exciting work that we're going to do to update the mandate of this advisory council so that they can be better prepared to provide the good guidance and recommendations to me today as the minister but also to future ministers as we transition. So, I am really proud to be part of that move to this next era within Yukon, to provide the tools for future ministers to work with our equality-seeking groups, and to once again hold up this advisory council and make it relevant to today's current state within the Yukon.

I just want to say again how much I appreciate the work that they've done over the years and some of the changes they have made. I look forward to continuing to work with them. I

am excited to get that committee back up and running with the appointment of a new chair and other community members.

I am not sure how much time I have left on this particular question because there were many questions posed at once, so if I run out of time, I will sit and stand again to finish answering. I think that they are important questions to be answered.

There was a question around funding for equality-seeking groups, particularly women's groups. I will go to the — again, my gratitude of course for the work that all equality-seeking organizations do in the Yukon to reduce gender-based violence and to build safer communities. This past year has shown us more than ever the critical importance of these services.

So, getting to the amount of funding that we provide from the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, this fiscal year, equality-seeking organizations are receiving a total of \$2,122,000 from the Women and Gender Equity Directorate in operational and project funding. We have done a couple of graphs that kind of break this down a little bit in terms of our overall budget within the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, which is \$3,017,000. So, out of that \$3,017,000, we have \$2,916,000 that goes directly toward program delivery — so 81 percent of our budget goes to that. The public education is \$256,000, which is seven percent of the budget, and then policy and research makes up the remainder, which is \$436,000, which is 12 percent of our budget.

Now, with the supplementary budget — which is what we are here to talk about today — it changes the numbers slightly. The transfer payments are \$2,097,000, which makes up 61 percent of the budget — personnel make up 29 percent of the budget and then 10 percent of the budget is for other.

I just wanted to talk about that a little bit — and maybe we will get into other questions; it seems like folks are a bit rushed to get through this because I think there are other things that potentially members from the opposition may want to talk about today — but I think that the work that the Women and Gender Equity Directorate does is very vital.

I know that, as we continue to respond and recover from the pandemic, we need to continue to work together to develop community- and culturally appropriate responses to address gender equality. Our government continues to work with our partners within Government of Canada and we have been successful. We have really leveraged a lot of money that we have allocated from Government of Yukon to create new programs. I mean, I think about women — the indigenous women's equality fund. That was a new fund that we put together and then leveraged that money to Canada to ensure that all of our indigenous women's organizations — which were chronically underfunded when I came into the position in 2016 — now are getting to a place of — we have catch-up. We have a lot of catch-up to do there in terms of catching our indigenous women's groups up to where other equality-seeking groups have been. What that means is that we have the indigenous women's equality fund providing \$600,000 in operational capacity development funding to the three indigenous women's groups — those are Liard Aboriginal Women's Society, Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle, and the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council.

Again, this is money that we allocated — some of that is from Yukon and the rest came from Canada. These were funds that were not available. I know that the member is asking specifically about one organization, but I think that, in terms of the funding that is allocated from the Women's Directorate — I have already gone over that kind of broad picture of the amount of money that we provide to equality-seeking groups, but I want to also point to the other funding that is received from Government of Yukon to these equality-seeking groups that do this really important, vital work. I am just not sure that folks are always aware that there are other funding sources that are coming to these organizations, and a lot of times it is using the money — the small amounts of money — that we do have in Government of Yukon to leverage other funds and to work with other partners like Canada and of course other departments within Government of Yukon.

I met with all of the groups that have been posed today — or at least one of them, but there are three others that are seeking a higher rate of funding: Les EssentiElles, Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, the Yukon Status of Women Council, and Yukon Women in Trades and Technology. We have met with them and what we committed to was continuing to have this conversation and to work with them to identify what the need is. One of the things that we talked about at that meeting was how we can work together. What we did see with the LGBTQ2S+ organizations that were seeking first-time funding — they had never had funding before — was that they had built a coalition and sort of an umbrella group that then received the funding on behalf of all of the groups. So, that is how we did that with the LGBTQ2S+ community. We started a little bit of that conversation.

I am not saying that this is where we are going to get to with other women's equality-seeking groups, but I am committed to continuing to have the conversation. I know that they do vital work on behalf of Yukoners. My commitment and support are there, 100 percent. I know the levels of violence against women in Canada in the north are three times higher than the rest of Canada. If you are an indigenous woman or a woman of colour, it is three times higher yet. So, I am very aware of the challenges that we have in our territory when it comes to gender-based violence, which is why I have really focused a lot of attention at the national level as well to ensure that I am a known voice at the table. That has yielded some good responses to Yukon women's organizations and other equality-seeking organizations in the Yukon. Those relationships really do matter.

I was very sad that Minister Monsef didn't get re-elected in the federal election. She has been instrumental in her commitment to ending gender violence against all women in Canada. I am looking forward to working with the new minister. I am sure that she will be as passionate as the former minister. I am continuing. My point there is that we must continue to have that strong relationship with Canada. Recovery from the global pandemic, in terms of the impact on women, is dependent upon it.

One of the things I heard on the CBC news this morning — I heard it this morning where they were talking about

100,000 jobs — women leaving 100,000 jobs in Canada over the global pandemic — and these are highly skilled, highly educated individuals — and also those who haven't come back — they haven't come back to their positions. This is our challenge, I think, in the Yukon and in Canada: to ensure that we help women get back to their jobs, which is one of the reasons why we acted quickly on universal childcare. That is a very key component to recovery from the global pandemic and helping women get back into the workforce.

I'll end my comments there. I know I went on for a bit, but I'm happy to continue to have this discussion. I think that it's a good one to have.

Ms. Tredger: I would like to follow up on some of the remarks the minister made. Specifically, I do want to talk about the funding for those four women's organizations under the women's equality fund which are asking for an increase in core funding. I know the minister said that there is access to different pots of money they can apply to, and I understand that's what she said to them in her letter on August 30.

The problem is that this is a really time-consuming thing for an organization to do. Having worked at NGOs, it is an immense amount of time to seek out these opportunities, put together applications, and then report on them to many different funders. It's really a huge amount of time, and I don't know if that's a good use of the time of the people who are leading these organizations — those who are some of our strongest leaders in our communities, who have to spend their time on reporting requirements rather than guiding their organizations.

If the Yukon government is providing this money through many different pots, my question to the minister is: Why not gather this together and give them a single core funding stream that they can count on, that they can plan with, and that is less onerous than applying to many different pots of money?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. I will continue on. We have met with these specific groups. We didn't have the amount of attention that I think we have had over the last five years previously. We had organizations that were chronically underfunded or not funded at all. They just didn't have any funding, and that includes some of our LGBTQ2S+ organizations. Now it has shifted, and we have shifted the indigenous women's groups into a different way of funding. I am well aware of the challenges. I am not suggesting that women's organizations spend all their time working on proposals. I know that world; I worked in that world. I had, at one point, 16 budgets that I had to manage, and I still managed to get that service out to folks so that it would be effective for them and then meet all the reporting requirements.

I know what that world looks like and I know the challenges, so that has been a big part of the conversation that we have had with these women's organizations — let's keep talking. I want to find a way forward with them — and can we find other ways, if we are funding from Government of Yukon? Possibly — I mean, that's part of the discussion and one of the things that we will be talking about.

I will just point out a few examples of that. The Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre receives a lot of funding from the Women and Gender Equity Directorate from different pots of

funding. I will just go through this one. They received: \$30,000 from Economic Development for a specific project; from Women and Gender Equity, \$50,000 from the women equality-seeking fund, and that's the one we are talking specifically of today; another \$100,000 for a women's advocate position; \$95,000 for a program called "A Safe Place"; also, there was a further \$25,000 for A Safe Place that comes from the prevention of violence against aboriginal women. So, in total from Government of Yukon, it is \$303,000 for that organization. I'm not saying that this is enough, because I know that they do a lot of work that we, as government, sometimes can't deliver to communities and that is better left being delivered by grassroots organizations. So, that is one example of where funding comes from.

Because this is my department as well — Yukon Women in Trades and Technology — the Department of Education funds \$262,691 to that organization, and then the Women and Gender Equity Directorate provides \$45,000. Again, when you start putting these funding pots together and start looking at where there are crossovers in mandates, that is the discussion that I'm wanting to have with these particular four women's organizations and maybe broader. I did start that conversation early in my first mandate and want to continue to have that discussion. When you look at the dollars that we are allocating to all of these organizations that do really important work on our behalf, we can certainly find ways to work together and find where we have crossovers in mandates and governance structures. There are four governance structures for four organizations, four executive directors, and four sets of staff. I think about efficiencies and ways that we can really hold each other up. That is exactly what the LGBTQ2S+ community did when we first funded — so that was the approach that was taken there.

I am not suggesting that we will get there for sure, but we want to have the conversation, so that is the commitment that we have made to the organizations. We will continue to have that.

I do not want to see our organizations spend most of their time doing funding proposals. We can help with that. That is where we really helped with Women and Gender Equality Canada when we developed the new indigenous women's equity fund. That was work that we helped to facilitate to happen. We helped to support the organizations to get the required documents, workplans, and everything else put together so that it made it easier for them to access that funding. Are we prepared to take those extra steps? Yes, we are. We will continue to support at whatever level we can and look forward to continuing that conversation with the governance body for the organizations, but also their executive directors who are the ones on the ground doing the hard work every day on behalf of Yukoners.

Ms. Tredger: Thank you to the minister for that answer. I appreciate her commitment to this issue.

I do want to point out a couple of comments on her reply. When I hear about "overlap" and "efficiencies", I get very nervous. I am all for collaboration, I am all for working together, and I am for not replicating things unnecessarily, but

I do want to highlight that redundancy is not always — having multiple points of access is not always a bad thing, and having multiple options for people to provide the same services is not always a bad thing. So, I would add that caution as that work goes forward.

I would like to talk a little bit about transportation, particularly from rural Yukon. As the minister highlighted, we are in a really difficult time for women who are most likely to experience intimate partner violence and other types of violence. We asked in the House recently — I believe that it was yesterday — about what transportation options are available for women who need to travel out of a community to access a women's shelter, for example. We were told that Victim Services can provide that.

Can the minister confirm that? If a woman in a remote community in the Yukon called Victim Services, would they be able to help her find transportation out of her community or to a place where she would be safe?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I worked on the front line for a long time and so I know that to be true. If you need to have access to emergency services, you can get emergency funds through Victim Services. Is it always enough or are you prepared go to those services, like Victim Services? That is the crux of it. That is the question. That is the issue because, a lot of times, women who are fleeing violence do not want to have other agencies involved. So, what I know is that shelters do not always have the funds to provide — I know that I went to 100 Women Who Care about a year ago, and they had Kaushee's Place come to do a fundraiser. They were one of the organizations, and I gave my money on that particular day because what they were doing was creating a slush fund so that they could anonymously provide assistance to women who were fleeing violence from communities to get to a safe place.

Is that the best answer? I think that there is a lot more that we can do.

I know that the Minister of Health and Social Services and of Justice and I, as Minister responsible for Women and Gender Equity, want to continue having those discussions. We want women to be safe. I worked on the front line for a long time in communities, and this was a particular issue and it has been for a long time.

I want to also point out — and I know this is pivoting a little bit but not really because it is going to get to something big for the Yukon.

We worked with all of our partners on *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ Strategy*. In the strategy, under community safety and justice, one of the areas that came up in every single community was transportation and communication. Our intent in 2.8 is to create an action plan that will focus on creating safe and affordable transportation and communication options for women and Yukon communities. All women — and I know this is focused on indigenous women, but when we have those structures in place and when we start building these action plans, it is good for all women, girls, and two-spirit-plus people; that is for sure.

When we developed this, we knew that, in taking on all of these actions, this is what the result would be. This is, again, every single level of government committing to implementing this strategy. We are now at the stage of building the implementation plan. We are close. We think that we will be, in early December to mid-December, ready to release so that we can disseminate this out to all of the partners to come together in our first accountability forum, which is scheduled for February 14 and 15. Hopefully, by then, we will be able to come together in person and not have it all remote and virtual, because this is the first time that we will come together and be accountable to each other. This is an important action plan within this strategy.

We have definitely put some thought into this. Are there some more immediate things we can do? I think there are. I am so committed to that and I have spent my entire working career on seeking not only justice but safety, equality, and wellness — particularly working in our rural communities.

It is what brought me back to run in the election again — these things that we need to implement, these important strategies. This is one of the reasons that got me back here in this House.

Ms. Tredger: It is very exciting to hear about the progress on that action plan. I am really excited to hear that more comprehensive strategy for communication and transportation is coming.

I have a couple follow-up questions about that. One is, in the meantime, would this government consider providing short-term funding to the organizations that people are more familiar with to help with transportation? I think the minister said it really accurately — not everyone is comfortable reaching out to Victim Services. So, would they consider, rather than Kaushee's having to do a fundraiser for this money, just providing that money so that people could access those transportation services through whatever organization is most comfortable for them?

I also want to ask about the communication piece because, last year, there was the cellphone program that was very well received, I think, by many vulnerable Yukon women and it was really a lifeline during the pandemic in lots of ways. Then it was suspended — as is my understanding — and then there was a commitment to reinstate the program without data but with calling and texting. I am wondering what the update is on that.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for that follow-up question. Yes, during the initial stages of the pandemic, we initiated a cellphone program and disseminated all those devices. Then it transitioned to Yukon Status of Women's Council, who then received federal funding to continue that program. It's unfortunate that the funding — that program was not further funded.

Again, that was a short-term kind of measure because we knew that there was less access to reliable communication, particularly for women who are fleeing violent situations — because home is not always safe for everyone, that's for sure. We know that.

I think that, in the longer term, these are things that need to be addressed in our transportation and communication action

plan. I know that this is not an immediate answer, but certainly we want to continue to build on that and find ways. I know that it was complicated. It was a complicated program for some of these smaller organizations to continue to deliver, so I know that this is probably one of — and we did do a review on that. So, I think that there are some findings there that we can bring back to the House as well.

There was another aspect of your question around if we will follow up from the previous one around finding ways to fund grassroots organizations to provide additional resources for women who require transportation needs or costs — to do it in a more anonymous way that doesn't involve other organizations. I am certainly committed — I will say that today — to having further discussions with my colleagues around that and the organizations that are providing those services, and I will come back.

You had also asked that I be cautious about when we are talking about efficiencies and overlap of mandates. I am very cautious. I know that there needs to be a lot of windows and ways for folks to access services that they need. I think it's more about finding ways that we can work in that — as you say — collaborative way to ensure that we are making the best use of the resources that we have and then looking at where the gaps are. I think that is an important part of it.

So, I will bring back some of the findings from the review of the cellphone program. Again, it will inform what we bring forward in the action plan that I have spoken about from our strategy on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people.

Ms. Tredger: Thank you for that answer. I'm going to shift gears a bit — although I might come back to this eventually — but I would like to talk a little bit about the Pride Centre and some of the funding there. I should start by saying that I am so thrilled that the Pride Centre is becoming a reality, and I'm so proud of the work those organizations have done. It was an absolute joy to tour the facility, and I just can't wait until its doors are opened. I'm really excited and proud of that work.

I wanted to ask a question about their funding. My understanding is that there has been an agreement signed for three years of funding that decreases over the three years, and please correct me if I'm wrong, but my understanding is that the hope is that they would then seek outside sources of funding to supplement that. Again, I want to raise the concern about expecting organizations to spend so much of their time — I think that the minister and I both know how time-intensive it is to deal with multiple funding sources and to fill out proposals. I just want to highlight my concern about that approach and I wonder if the minister could comment on why that choice was made.

Hon. Ms. McLean: We were very pleased to be able to move forward with the funding allocation for Queer Yukon Society to establish the first-ever Pride Centre in the Yukon. The total for three years is \$1,330,000 — that's \$515,000 for this year, \$440,000 for next year, and the next year is \$375,000. Yes, there is definitely a move to be able to seek other funds, as we move forward. But the other part of that is that we have committed to review this at year two to see where we're at.

I want to see success. We want success with the Pride Centre, and we want to be able to ensure that the supports are in place for folks in the LGBTQ2S+ community. I know that's the ultimate goal — to have a good, safe space with a number of different types of programming happening. That's the other part of it, though — that we have agreed to do a review at year two to see how things are going and look at where we need to go or if there are further needs that are identified.

I am really pleased with the working relationship that we have been able to establish with Queer Yukon. I see them as a vital partner in the equality-seeking movement and in Yukon. I am so looking forward to seeing the success of the centre and seeing the results of it. So, that is where things are at this point.

Ms. Tredger: I thank the minister for that update.

I do have a couple of questions about the *Inclusion Action Plan*. Again, I am so excited that this plan exists. I am really proud of all the work — really, the work of so many community activists and student activists. People have worked really hard to get us here and I just want to acknowledge them because it is tremendous work.

I do have a few questions about the action plan — which are also related to education — so I am hoping that will be something that the minister can speak to. It talks about, over the next five years, working across government to develop comprehensive sexual education for all Yukon schools that is inclusive of LGBTQ2S+ needs. I am wondering why that is a five-year project. That seems like something that should be happening quickly.

I am also a little bit concerned about some of the language and I am hoping the minister can clarify. For example, it talks about “encouraging GSAs”. I am wondering why that is not just “require GSAs”. It talks about “supporting the use of self-identified names”. Again, I am not sure why that is not just “require people to use people’s names”.

I was also concerned — it describes a timeline for responding to requests for gender-neutral washrooms. Again, I don't know why we are waiting for requests. I wonder why that couldn't just be “provide gender-neutral washroom spaces in schools”. So, perhaps the minister can comment on those parts of the plan.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thanks for the question; I think it's really an important one and one that came out very clearly in our consultation as we were gathering information and this whole focus around the education piece. We want to, of course, ensure that everyone feels safe and welcome in school. This is such an important aspect of it.

To support the students who identify as LGBTQ2S+, the Yukon government implemented a system-wide sexual orientation and gender identity policy in 2012. We're committed to reviewing that. We're working to ensure that, of course, all Yukon schools follow this policy and that all students are treated with the respect that they deserve. This is a commitment of course — lots of folks — especially in this House — have heard me talk about it a lot. It is one that is really important. So, I am really pleased to have both portfolios, to work toward realizing the sexual orientation and gender identity policy and continuing that work. We do see it as a big

part of the inclusive and special education review. Last Friday, we had the education summit to talk about inclusive and special education and the implementation of those recommendations and we had some really great discussions with presenter Shelley Moore. If you don't know about Shelley Moore, look her up on YouTube and listen to some of the work that she has done — and also Dr. Nikki Yee, who presented. We continually came back to folks who identify within the LGBTQ2S+ community and ways we will work toward full inclusion in our schools and so I am very excited to be in both these portfolios to work with the Department of Education around really moving this forward with Women and Gender Equity.

In terms of the language, I will go back and look at that language on just having GSAs in schools. That is part of what we can identify in inclusive and special education. That's definitely something we will look at.

Gender-neutral washrooms — I think that this is an area we agree on, absolutely. It does come into the capital planning. Some projects will be on a much larger scale. So, I am very committed to seeing this happen. In all of our new builds, this will be the move going forward. That is definitely there, and I am really happy to see, as renovations come up in other government buildings — Tourism and Culture was one of the first ones — that is now a gender-neutral washroom. It will work into the plan as we go forward and it will work into the capital planning. Some of those are bigger projects — like we are building Whistle Bend school and we will be building a school in Burwash Landing. As we move through these, those will be considerations in the design. Then there are the smaller capital projects. As we move through and look at safety within schools, these are definite considerations that we are looking at from the Department of Education lens. Some will take longer than others, but the commitment is there.

Again, work should have happened decades ago, but it didn't. So, we are now here in this space, committed to an action plan that will bring us to a different place. One of the things about the action plan is that it is evergreen, and we said we would review it. We said we would keep renewing and, as things change and items come off of the action plan and are completed, then we will look at what is next and keep moving that work along.

Once I really became familiar in a real way about the issues that LGBTQ2S+ people face just in terms of accessing a washroom — it's ridiculous. We should have been doing this work a long time ago. So, our commitment is to get the work done in a timely manner. If we can move projects up, we will. That is definitely my commitment and I will always be advocating for that from my role.

Ms. Tredger: I do appreciate the comments on that and the minister's commitment to go back and look at some of that language, as well as the work happening around things like gender-neutral bathrooms.

This isn't new information, but it is really tough to ask kids to advocate for their needs about something like this, so the more we can make it easy for them, the more we can make it so that they don't have to advocate for their own needs to the schools. I think that the more we can do that, the better.

I would like to change gears and go back to *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ Strategy*. I have a couple of follow-up questions that I would like to ask. One of the commitments was, I believe, commitment 2.2: "Evaluate Sharing Common Ground — Yukon's Police Force Review (2010)". I am wondering if there is an update on that and if that evaluation has happened.

Hon. Ms. McLean: All of the actions were important, but I worked on *Sharing Common Ground* back in 2010. I was an advisor and I worked on it for a number of years — along with a lot of partners and folks — and then I worked on the implementation as well.

Policing in the territory came up over and over during the consultation. It was certainly one of the pathways that we could see and know in the national inquiry — *Reclaiming Power and Place*. The pathway they identified was "maintaining the status quo and institutional lack of will". We had the four corresponding responses. The response to that — our pathway was community safety and justice. So, it was very important to all Yukon First Nation communities that we revisit *Sharing Common Ground*. A lot of folks felt that there were pieces left undone and that there were pieces that were not implemented back in 2010 and beyond that date.

This particular action plan is being developed right now between the Department of Justice and the Yukon Council of First Nations. This action plan is well underway. The entire implementation plan for this strategy is being developed right now with a technical working group that has a number of technical writers and advisors and this is the approach that the Yukon Advisory Committee on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls — of which I am one of the co-chairs — Chief Doris Bill is another and Ann Maje Raider is another from the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society — and then we have organizations and representatives from families, other women's organizations, indigenous women's organizations, and other partners and ex officio members. When we decided how we would do this implementation plan, we built a technical working group that has representation from each of the women's groups and from Government of Yukon, and that it is facilitated and it has the expertise it needs to really build a full implementation plan. The intent is — like I have said a lot of times — to build out a full action plan on each of these items. There are 31 in the strategy. This one is well underway, and it's important.

Just in the last Yukon Forum, we heard Yukon First Nations talking about some of the issues that they have around policing and safety. So, this work that we will do to revisit that and go back to the 2010 report, *Sharing Common Ground*, is really vitally important going forward. I think that is the way that we will chart our path forward. The RCMP also have been ex officio on the Yukon Advisory Committee on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and the commanding officer Scott Shepperd is the designate for that committee — so very tuned in and committed. Scott Shepperd also did the declaration at the ceremony that we had last year on December 10 when we launched the strategy.

Ms. Tredger: Thank you for that answer. I am very much looking forward to reading the implementation plan and I want to thank everyone who has been working on that. That is something that I think we are all looking forward to.

This is my final question and I realize that I neglected to thank the members from the department for coming. I really appreciate your time here today and your help in answering these questions as well as the work you and your departments do all year long.

My final question is about providing supportive community housing to justice-involved women. That commitment is in the minister's mandate letter. We know that, right now, there are pretty significant gaps for women. The current model of the transition facility under — not John Howard but connected — there have been a lot of concerns about where that is housed — particularly about where that is housed.

I am wondering what actions have been taken to provide supportive community housing to justice-involved women.

Hon. Ms. McLean: That is a really important question. It is one of the items that I was presented with in my mandate letter — to work with Justice as the lead on this particular area. So, the Government of Yukon is considering options to provide supervised community housing for justice-involved women. Program models that are under consideration include gender-responsive, culturally appropriate, and trauma-informed services and supports for women who do not require high-security custodial care but need supportive, safe, and supervised community housing. Any program development will recognize the unique needs of women involved with the criminal justice system and will aim to support them as they transition from custody to community, provide for an alternative to custody, or support their participation when accessing services through the Yukon's treatment courts.

Discussions with our partners, local stakeholders, and subject matter experts increase our understanding of how we can support the unique needs of justice-involved women in the Yukon. I come from that background of working directly within the justice system and have worked with many women who are justice-involved, in a lot of different ways. I know that there is absolutely a need for this type of support and one that we're very committed to. Both the Minister of Justice and I will work together. It is part of both of our mandate letters, which we received on July 5, to establish a program to provide supported community housing to justice-involved women.

I know that my department officials are working with Justice now. It is not something that we want to take our time with, because I think that it's something that is needed in our community and has been a gap. When we talk about gaps, this is certainly one of them, and it has been for a very long time.

I'm very pleased to be part of the discussions around this and the planning for it.

Ms. Tredger: Thank you for the answers, and that concludes my questions for this department.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I just wanted to thank the officials for being here today and for the questions. I really enjoyed talking about this important area of our work within Yukon. I

appreciate the thoughtful questions that have been put forward to me. Any time that any members from the opposition and Third Party want to discuss any matters directly with me involving anything to do with women and gender equity, or anything related to that, I would be more than willing to have those discussions and want to have those discussions. So, I thank members again for the questions today.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate?

Seeing none, we will proceed to line-by-line debate.

Ms. Tredger: Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, cleared or carried

Chair: The Member for Whitehorse Centre has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$440,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$440,000 agreed to Women and Gender Equity Directorate agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 10 minutes.

Recess

Chair: Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Highways and Public Works — continued

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I will take this opportunity to introduce my officials again — Sherri Young to my left and Deputy Minister Paul McConnell to my right.

I have some comments on various topics, but for now, perhaps I'll leave it to the member opposite for his first questions.

Mr. Hassard: I thank the officials for coming back again today. I know that they enjoy it here.

The previous Minister of Highways and Public Works claimed that closing Central Stores and reducing services at Queen's Printer would save the government money. I'm curious if the minister could tell us if that is, in fact, the case. Has it saved money? How much money has it saved the Yukon government?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. I can provide a more detailed analysis of the Central Stores issue at a future date, but I do have some notes from my officials with respect to the closure of Central Stores. It is indicated that savings at Highways and Public Works as a result of the closure of the Queen's Printer and Central Stores warehouse amounted to approximately \$620,000 per year every year since the closure took effect, which I am advised was in April 2020.

Highways and Public Works has put into place standing offer agreements for office supplies for all of Yukon government, and it's working on new innovative procurement for office supplies that does not require a warehouse, that supports local vendors, that creates opportunities for better pricing, and that will allow us to analyze spending and savings across Yukon government.

Mr. Hassard: I guess the only follow-up question I would have in that regard would be how the government is quantifying how much time and money is spent — extra time and money is spent — by individual departments having to do their own shopping.

I had a few more questions around the First Nation procurement policy. One of the concepts behind the First Nation procurement policy — or one of the ideas — was to create smaller contracts for smaller contractors. Yet, last week, there was a tender closed for brushing and clearing of gravel pits on the Campbell Highway — there were five pits between kilometre 414 and 529. Rather than doing those five pits separately or maybe bundling ones that were close together, the government chose to put out all five of those pits, which covered 115 kilometres approximately, all as one tender.

I am curious as to if the minister has an explanation as to why the government would do that when in fact they had said that they would start to do smaller contracts and break contracts out rather than bundling them together.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: What I can advise is that, over the territory in a given year, a variety of size contracts are provided for brushing, which provide different opportunities for different potential bidders. I'm not in a position today to comment on the strategy or why the specific contract the member opposite is asking about — on the Campbell Highway — was bundled. The

information I have for the member opposite is that it was bundled, but I'm also being advised — in a general sense — for the totality of brushing contracts that are provided in a given brushing season, that various opportunities and various sizes of contracts are provided.

Mr. Hassard: It's unfortunate that the minister doesn't have an answer to that, but I guess we'll keep plugging away here, seeing the time.

I'm curious as to if the minister can tell us how many First Nation businesses are currently listed on the registry with the First Nation Chamber of Commerce. Does he have any idea — I don't believe that they knew how many First Nation businesses there were before this policy came into place, but does he have any idea how many more First Nation businesses there are now than there were before the First Nation procurement policy came into place?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I think that in previous comments I made during Committee of the Whole debate with respect to Highways and Public Works, I indicated that, as of approximately a month ago, there were 35 businesses on the registry that may submit their verification documents and others that may want to join. As I pointed out also a few days ago, this is currently the eight-week verification period and, in early December, the report will come back as to which First Nation businesses are verified.

The answer is 35 — from about a month ago. To avoid only registering one business at a time and uploading them to the registry individually, we are trying to make the process fair by completing all verifications during the eight-week period and uploading them at the same time.

That report from the First Nation Chamber of Commerce, I think, will come back in early December.

Mr. Hassard: The second half of that question was if the minister could tell us if that was an increase or what percentage of an increase that was over previous to the policy coming into effect.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Also as I indicated, I believe, two days ago — because now there is a definition, pursuant to the working group that got together to define what a "Yukon First Nation business" was — I set out the criteria — which I could put on the record now, but I won't, in the interest of time — but there are five different components. I take the member opposite's point that it was a little unclear as to what the definition of a "Yukon First Nation business" was previously, but through the work of the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce and the working group, we have definitions, so it is difficult, in that respect, to compare apples to apples and to say with any degree of accuracy that I understand what the number of verified First Nation businesses were prior to the implementation of the First Nation procurement policy because there was no agreed-upon criteria.

Mr. Hassard: I can appreciate that. I am curious if the minister can tell us how the government plans on dealing with shell companies. I will just leave it at that — to see what they are going to do about someone just creating a shell company to take advantage of the BVR.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you to the member opposite for his question. I can certainly say that, in the meetings that I have had on the Yukon First Nation procurement policy with respect to the Contractors Association and the First Nation Chamber of Commerce, this has been an area of concern. All parties are alive to the fact that this policy will not be a success if so-called shell companies are not detected or not disqualified by virtue of the verification process. The working group over the course of this summer — since February of this year — this is an overarching concern that exists.

What I would say is that the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce will now be managing the business registry and the verification process. It is essential that all businesses on the registry be verified to ensure that the benefits of the policy are going to the right people. For Yukon First Nation businesses to be added to the registry and earn bid value reductions, they will need to be verified. For the Yukon First Nation business to be verified, they will need to submit the appropriate documentation to verify that they meet the definition of a "Yukon First Nation business" under the policy.

As far as logistics, the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce already works to support and represent Yukon First Nation-owned businesses. It made sense for those businesses to go through the verification process with an entity that they already had a relationship with.

It is essential that all businesses on the registry meet the definition of a "Yukon First Nation business" under the policy. By having only verified businesses on the registry, everyone can feel confident that all businesses meet the requirements of the policy when accessing the registry.

As I think I have indicated before, depending on the complexity of the ownership structure, it will take up to 15 business days, recognizing that, in the initial months, there may be a large volume of applicants, which could impact the verification timelines.

As I indicated to the member opposite on a prior day, a Yukon First Nation business meets one of the following criteria — which, if necessary, I will go through, but I won't do that right now.

Then, of course, we also have the Monitor and Review Committee that has been set up, and I could go into greater detail about that.

It's the desire of all of the stakeholders that this policy succeed and meet the objectives of raising the economic prospects of First Nation persons in the spirit of reconciliation in chapter 22 and also so that First Nation governments and their beneficiaries can benefit, generally speaking, from the growth in the general Yukon economy.

I have more here on the Monitor and Review Committee and what success looks like, which I can go into if the member opposite is interested.

But I certainly agree with the member opposite that, for this First Nation procurement policy to be successful, we do not want to see shell companies. We want to see, ideally, Yukon-based companies that are employing a significant number of indigenous skilled labour and that the number of First Nation-defined businesses and the dollar value of the government-led

contracts goes from approximately seven to eight percent to approximately 15 percent, with monitoring and reviewing occurring on a monthly basis. Contractors are very keen to stay on top of this. Contractors are very keen to ensure that this policy is operating as intended.

Mr. Hassard: I guess, kind of along those lines as well — the government has said that essentially the company will receive a report card showing whether or not they lived up to their promises. In the tender, if you said that you were going to have X number of First Nation employees and if in fact you don't, how is a poor mark on your report card going to reflect in bidding on future contracts?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. This is where you have the interplay or the overlap of the Yukon First Nation procurement policy with the recently announced program of vendor performance review. I will go into this briefly and then see if the member opposite has any follow-up questions about this.

The vendor performance review program came into effect in October. This new program will evaluate and score vendors on their performance throughout a government contract. Through this new program, we will incentivize good performance from vendors, encourage project managers and vendors to work together, and provide feedback to vendors on how to improve. Once suppliers have had time to build their scores, high performers will receive more points during tender valuations, which will increase their chances to secure government contracts. Through this program, we are aiming to incentivize good performance from vendors, encourage vendors and Yukon government project managers to work closely together and communicate throughout the contract, and provide feedback to vendors on ways in which they can improve their performance.

When a vendor receives their score, they can either accept, reject, or not respond. If a vendor accepts the score, it is applied to the vendor's overall ranking. If there is no response within 15 calendar days, the score automatically applies. If a vendor rejects their score, the project manager will mediate with the vendor to come to an agreement. If no agreement can be reached after 15 calendar days, there is an appeal process.

To one of the specific questions from the member opposite, another connection to this program is the Yukon First Nation procurement policy. One of the criteria that a vendor can be scored on is the fulfillment of their tendering commitments to Yukon First Nation participation.

The Yukon government will phase the program implementation to ensure that project managers and vendors are familiar with the program before it affects the actual building processes. Briefly, in phase 1, which just launched in October 2021, the Yukon government soft-launched the new program for vendors by capturing scores but removing them from the vendor's record after the first year of collection. During that time, there will be communication with the vendors and contractors.

In phase 2, to be launched in October 2022, the Yukon government will capture scores for one year. These scores will

lead to the vendor's overall score, but there will be no impacts to vendors on the procurement process during this phase.

Then, finally, the rubber hits the road in phase 3 in October 2023. The Yukon government will take the average of the vendor's scores from the last year and consider them. During the procurement process, vendors will continue to receive scores, which will adjust their average score on an ongoing basis.

Then, finally, Madam Chair, based on the tender type, there are up to seven key performance indicators that are assessed for each contract, which creates an average performance score. The key performance indicators are cost control, health and safety, quality assurance, schedule and time controls, staff and administration, Yukon First Nation participation, and functionality and training for goods contracts.

As I said before, this vendor performance review program has been a long time in the making and it will take a while to fully implement. But, with respect to the value proposition for government contracts — but also so that there is transparency. As the member opposite has indicated in his question, it will start to be now — but there certainly will be increasing consequences for not doing what you said that you would do, as the contracting party.

The member opposite will well know that one of the main disincentives — or one of the main levers that the government or any contractor has — is holdbacks. I anticipate, with respect to contracts even now that are not subject to the vendor performance review program, that the manner in which the contracts are administered by Highways and Public Works — they are currently subject to holdback provisions. It seems to me that the vendor performance review program will be more objective.

Nothing is perfect, as far as objectivity, but there do appear to be objective parameters and objective guidelines for a report card of sorts.

Mr. Hassard: A couple of other questions that I had for the minister — can he inform the House if the reverse trade show that Highways and Public Works traditionally has will be going forward this year, or will there be any changes due to COVID?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Yes, I think that the original plan was that it was going to be in person. However, with intervening COVID-related events, I am advised now that it will be a one-day virtual event and is currently scheduled for November 24.

Mr. Hassard: I thank the minister for that.

The other day, my colleague asked the minister about the ten \$1-million contracts, and the minister talked about four of those contracts. I am wondering if he could provide any more information now, after he has had a few days to get details on it, on what the other six contracts coming forward might be.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I think that I have a slightly updated list. Five contracts have been awarded during this fiscal year so far. The access road bridge replacement no. 4 at the Ketza River mine was awarded to Boreal Engineering Ltd. The HVAC system and paint booth ventilation system replacement at the

Parks building in Whitehorse was awarded to Hvactech Systems. Surface works and underground utilities for the Logan residential lots in Whitehorse were awarded to Castle Rock Enterprises Ltd. The fuel tank replacement and boilers at the field operations building in Haines Junction was awarded to Budget Plumbing & Heating. The Tanana road construction in Burwash Landing was awarded to Upland Mining. Those two that I just mentioned in Haines Junction and Burwash are described as “recent” awards. One tender has closed, but the contract has not been awarded, and that is for the Hidden Valley school prefabricated modular building placement and connections in Whitehorse. That leaves us with five potential projects remaining to be tendered in fiscal year 2021-22.

Highways and Public Works is currently reviewing additional projects against the selection criteria. I can certainly endeavour to get more information for the member opposite, but it looks like four have absolutely been confirmed, and one tender has been closed.

Mr. Hassard: I guess that my final question to the minister would be to ask if he could provide us with information on what those contracts are as they come out.

With that, I would just thank the officials for being here. I certainly hope that they enjoyed their time as much as I did.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I think, in answer to one of his colleagues over the last few days, it may be on the record as to which site it is on — but, yes, we will provide that information to the member opposite. I am sure my officials have noted that down and will keep the member opposite apprised of those additional contracts.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my officials for being here. I guess we should see if there is any further debate — sorry.

Mr. Kent: I know that a number of my colleagues also have additional questions that are riding-specific, and we’ll provide those either as written questions or in letters to the minister, but I believe we’re prepared to move into line-by-line debate and clear HPW relatively quickly.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works?

Seeing none, we will proceed to line-by-line debate.

Mr. Kent: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, cleared or carried

Chair: The Member for Copperbelt South has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$8,776,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$8,776,000 agreed to

Department of Highways and Public Works agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for five minutes.

Recess

Chair: Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Education

Hon. Ms. McLean: Madam Chair, I would like to ask my colleagues to help me welcome to the Legislative Assembly today our officials, Deputy Minister Nicole Morgan and Andrea McIntyre, director of finance. Thank you so much for coming and being part of our deliberations today on the 2021-22 supplementary budget.

I am pleased to rise in the House today to present the Department of Education’s first supplementary budget for 2021-22. Across the learning continuum, from early learning to adult learning, we are all continuing to adjust to living with COVID-19. Our education recovery efforts are underway, and we are making investments in universal childcare, modern learning environments, and training and employment supports for adult learners. We are taking the initial steps needed to sustain our longer term education recovery efforts, and our supplementary budget reflects just that.

As a department, we work to be fiscally responsible for the benefit of Yukoners. This supplementary budget reflects how the department is working to achieve its priorities for education as we move through the pandemic, which includes: ensuring the health and safety of learners and staff; ensuring that learning continues for all learners; supports for learners with diverse learning needs and those in need of additional supports; and support for learners, teachers, and support staff for flexible learning, including access to technology, tools, and training.

We are making investments in capital infrastructure, which are required to address our aging infrastructure, meet growing enrolment, and create modern learning environments in community spaces.

In the supplementary budget request, we are asking for an increase of \$13.216 million in O&M, all of which is recoverable from Canada. There is a slight decrease in general revenues of \$5,000 related to the extension program fees, and we are also asking for a net increase of \$119,000 in capital.

Thank you for the opportunity to go over the changes to capital and maintenance funding in more detail and to explain how the department is effectively and responsibly allocating funds and resources to support learners of all ages.

COVID-19 has made it clear that, without access to childcare, too many parents — especially women — cannot fully participate in the workforce. Our government is committed to building on the universal childcare program that we launched last April. This past summer, the Department of Education announced the signing of a Canada-wide early learning and childcare agreement with Canada. This agreement is worth nearly \$42 million over five years and will be used to build on Yukon's efforts to date and to ensure that families have access to an average of \$10 per day out-of-pocket parent fees for full-time, licensed early learning and childcare spaces for children under the age of six.

This agreement results in an approximate increase in O&M of \$5 million, all of which is 100-percent recoverable. Through this agreement, the department will be focusing on parent fee reductions, funding for First Nations, minority language and non-profit centres, and quality and inclusive programming. We also signed a Canada-Yukon early learning and childcare agreement with Canada that will provide \$10.1 million in funding over four years and a one-time investment of nearly \$2.5 million to support the development of Yukon's local early childhood educator workforce through recruitment and retention efforts. This will increase O&M by approximately \$4.9 million — again, 100-percent recoverable.

Through this bilateral agreement, the department will be focusing on enhancements to supportive and inclusive programming. The workforce annex to the bilateral agreement will allow the department to focus on flexible career pathways, indigenous and rural education, professional development, and support.

Through both of these agreements, the funds have been allocated to further improve access to high-quality, affordable, flexible and inclusive early learning and childcare programs and services. We are also supporting the credentialing of early childcare educators, along with the retention of early childcare educators in the workplace. These are important steps in building a strong local workforce of high-quality educators. Over time, this will increase the number of early learning and childcare spaces for parents and children across the Yukon.

Moving on to the post-secondary labour market, our workforce is facing new challenges. Along with the federal government, we are working to ensure access to training and employment supports to help Yukoners develop new skills and find jobs. We are focused on supporting those in hard-hit sectors and groups disadvantaged as a result of the pandemic. In the Department of Education's O&M request, we have \$3.1 million in the post-secondary and labour market unit for the

labour market development agreement and workforce development agreements.

Canada approved, for all provinces and territories, to carry forward the 2020-21 unspent funds into the 2021-22 budget year. We have carried forward \$3 million. These funds have already been recovered from Canada.

I will move on to capital, but before I do, I just want to make a note that we are very proud of the work that our department did. I know that I have moved on from early learning and childcare quickly, but I want to just point out that Yukon was the first territory in Canada to sign on to one of the early learning childcare agreements. I am very proud of that work and the work that the department did on behalf of Yukoners to achieve such a significant agreement.

Moving on to capital, we are making important investments in our capital infrastructure. These investments will address our aging infrastructure, meet growing enrolment, and create modern learning environments and community spaces. With respect to capital, we are asking for a net increase of \$119,000 from the main estimates. The drivers of the change in the capital budget are related to several projects.

First, there is an increase of \$2.4 million in the costs for the Robert Service modular project, which is 100-percent recoverable under the Investing in Canada infrastructure program. The total estimated expenditure for the modular addition in 2021-22 is \$6.4 million.

We continue to ensure that the Ross River School is safe for students and staff, and we are investing in remediation and stabilization work as well as completing ongoing maintenance and upgrades to the school. There continue to be delays attributed to COVID-19. As a result, the Ross River School remediation project is delayed. This delay has resulted in a decrease of \$1.6 million. We expect to spend \$900,000 on the project in 2021-22. The decrease of the \$1.6 million will see \$1 million remaining in the five-year plan for the Ross River School remediation, but the timing of the cash flow has been adjusted to future years.

I was very happy to participate in the land blessing ceremony for the Whistle Bend elementary school a couple of weeks ago. It is the first new elementary school in Whitehorse in more than 25 years. It will ensure that we have a modern learning space that will allow families in this growing neighbourhood and surrounding area to thrive for years to come. This school will help accommodate student enrolment growth in the north end of Whitehorse.

Based on the tendering process, the cashflow of expenditures has been adjusted to reflect the awarded proponent's project schedule, resulting in a decrease of approximately \$1.5 million. We have budgeted \$9 million for this project in 2021-22.

Other notable capital projects are connected to early learning and childcare, including \$515,000 for software development, which is 100-percent recoverable, and \$329,000 for building renovations needed at the Education central administration building to facilitate the transfer of the unit from Health and Social Services to Education.

I would like to acknowledge and thank educators and operators across the full learning continuum for their dedication and tireless efforts to keep learning spaces open and available for learners of all ages and for their resiliency and adaptability and Yukon First Nations and partners in Education and colleagues from across the Yukon for their ongoing collaboration and solidarity in our efforts to support all learners.

Of course, I want to thank our chief medical officer of health and the staff for their dedication and unwavering commitment to keep Yukoners safe, particularly, most recently, Dr. Kancir, who has been appointed from the chief medical officer of health's office to work with us on keeping our schools safe. He has been fabulous in meeting the needs and going the extra mile and ensuring that good assessments are done on a daily basis. I really want to express my appreciation to that office. It has been a long 20 months, and our school system has been greatly impacted. As I've said, the resiliency and adaptability of our schools is really outstanding.

I want to again thank the officials here and all of those folks who are behind the scenes and working to ensure that we keep moving forward. I think that a really excellent example of that was on Friday, when we had an incredible experience together with the education summit, which brought some 600 participants to the summit in a virtual format. We were able to hear from Dr. Nikki Yee, who wrote the report on the *Review of Inclusive and Special Education in the Yukon*, and we had a presentation from Shelley Moore, who was incredible. I encourage everyone to look her up. It will help you to think outside the box in terms of where we are going with our education system and how exciting it is.

I want to thank Harold and Phil Gatensby for starting us in such a great way, in ceremony and holding a sacred fire, to hold that sacred space for us while we did this work together, starting the implementation of the work plan that we have worked really hard on with our partners for the last few months to get to a place where we have an agreed-upon work plan that will chart our path forward as we move into revising our education system in the Yukon. I thank Phil and Harold for becoming available to us as knowledge-keepers and guides in that way of knowing — the traditional knowledge and the knowing, being, and doing. That is what we did together on Friday. We were putting reconciliation in action. It was exciting to be part of it, and it was so real. I encourage folks — if they want to see any other recordings or anything from the summit, I would be more than happy to make that available to folks to be able to hear some of the presentations and also see the interactions that we had among our educators and all of our partners.

What we know for sure is that everyone has to be “in” in order to create the change that is needed in the Yukon. I definitely felt that, and I know that, even in the midst of a global pandemic and what we have been through for the last 20 months, people are excited and felt motivated and inspired after that day together. There is so much more to come.

We have launched our working groups, and they are now populating with folks who will work on certain topic areas. I'm sure that we'll have a lot more time over the next days in general debate to talk about all of these things, but I wanted to

just take that opportunity to say these things that I think our educators — and folks who are on the front line doing this work each and every day — are not hearing all the time. They are only hearing the negative; they're only hearing the things that aren't going well, so I want to hold them up and thank them very much. To all of our partners, exciting things are happening.

So, I'm looking forward to the debate on Education. I'm looking forward to answering the questions that we have for the Education supplementary budget for 2021-22.

I thank you very much, and I will stop talking now.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for her opening remarks and welcome her officials. I also thank her officials for the briefing that they provided to the opposition with respect to the supplementary estimates.

As I said when I started my other critic role of Energy, Mines and Resources, it has been a number of years since we have been able to have a fulsome debate on the main estimates, so many of the questions that I have with respect to Education will be policy questions related to the main estimates. I'm sure that the minister won't be surprised to hear that after listening to other departments get debated here over the past number of weeks and as we head into the final couple of weeks of this current Fall Sitting.

There are a number of issues that I'm going to be touching on with the minister. I want to go through her mandate letter with her and look at some of the action items that the Premier has tasked her with. There are a number of capital projects that I'm hoping we can get a chance to talk about. I want to talk about programming around French immersion and the staff shortage. The First Nation school board is something that is top of mind for those school communities, especially for those school communities that have agreed, by way of school council motion, to go to the referendum or the school communities that are just working right now through the petition process. We'll look to engage on that with the minister as well.

Student transportation is always a concern for many families, and I have some questions around scheduling and service that have been raised by Yukoners and constituents of mine.

Madam Chair, seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Copperbelt South that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

May the House have a report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the House do now adjourn.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to

Speaker: This House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

The following legislative returns were tabled November 17, 2021:

35-1-12

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Clarke related to general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — 4th and Jeckell housing project (Pillai)

35-1-13

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Tredger related to general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — demolitions and transition units (Pillai)

The following documents were filed November 17, 2021:

35-1-21

Energy efficiency retrofit financing program, letter re (dated October 18, 2021) from Albert Drapeau, Executive Director, Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (Mostyn)

35-1-22

Better Buildings Program, letter re (dated October 29, 2021) from Ron Rousseau, President, Yukon Federation of Labour, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (Mostyn)

35-1-23

Proposed changes to the Municipal Act and Taxation and Assessment Act, letter re (dated November 12, 2021) from Gord Curran, Mayor, Village of Teslin, to Kate White, Leader of the Third Party (White)

35-1-24

Wildland firefighters, letter re (dated November 12, 2021) from Nicholas O'Carroll, IAFF Local 2217 Whitehorse Firefighters Association, to Kate White, Leader of the Third Party (White)

35-1-25

Yukon Lottery Commission Annual Report 2020-21 (Pillai)

35-1-26

Response to request for analysis re testing as a substitute to vaccination, letter re (dated November 16, 2021) from Paul Moore, Public Service Commissioner, to Yukon Employees' Union and Yukon Teachers' Association (Streicker)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 34

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, November 18, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier Government House Leader* Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
Hon. Nils Clarke	Riverdale North	Minister of Highways and Public Works; Environment
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Government House Leader* Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Minister of Economic Development; Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Jeanie McLean	Mountainview	Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

Currie Dixon	Leader of the Official Opposition Copperbelt North	Scott Kent	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Yvonne Clarke	Porter Creek Centre	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Emily Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Annie Blake	Vuntut Gwitchin

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

*Government House Leader: Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee to November 4, 2021; Hon. John Streicker from November 5, 2021

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, November 18, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.**

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.
We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

Speaker's statement — in recognition of National Child Day

Speaker: I would like to introduce Annette King, Child and Youth Advocate, and Chantai Minet, youth advisor.

I am now going to make some remarks. November 20 is National Child Day, a day that we recognize to show Canada's commitment to uphold children's rights. Thirty years ago, Canada ratified the United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, UNCRC, making a historic commitment to the world's children to uphold children's rights, both globally and at home.

Children have rights to be protected from harm, to develop to their full potential, and to be an active participant in their own lives. National Child Day provides an opportunity to celebrate the power of youth's voice and the actions of those who work to promote the realization of children's rights.

Throughout the Yukon, young people are stepping up and taking the lead on issues that directly impact them, whether it is reconciliation, environmental issues, education, mental health, social justice, arts, sports, and more. The government recently tabled a report prepared by the Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change, in which the Yukon First Nations Climate Action Fellowship was also presented.

Young people have shown an incredible resilience and ability to adapt in the midst of an unprecedented year dealing with COVID restrictions and interruptions to their social and educational lives. We could, and should, all look at them as an example.

Today, I would like to bring to your attention an initiative called "Communities Building Youth Futures", or CBYF. CBYF is a collective of young people and youth-serving organizations working toward developing a territory-wide Yukon youth strategy to support our young people on the issues that matter most to them.

CBYF is led by a team of youth interns who are guiding action teams around four main priorities: youth voice; mental health and wellness; individualized learning; and career inclusion. The first year's interns were Vanessa Oliverio, Samreen Ahmad, Zarah Sydney, Yebin Park, Isaiah Jekesta, and Kamryn Williamson and supported by CBYF manager Robin Mennell.

The interns published a research report highlighting the issues most important to Yukon youth. Earlier this year, interns from CBYF worked with the Child Youth and Advocate office to provide presentations to our former Speaker, the Member for Riverdale North, Yukon deputy ministers, and Yukon government policy analysts about implementing child rights impact assessments in policy development.

This year's interns are Zeta Gallan, Gwen Radzimirska, Ayesha Ahmad, Jennifer Tuton, Samreen Ahmad, supported by project manager Maxime Crawford-Holland. CBYF has provided support to the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate office in conducting a review of school attendance in the Yukon, producing a youth storytelling book highlighting children's rights, and a youth-led engagement in anticipating a review of the Yukon *Child and Youth Advocate Act*.

Youth advisors have developed a child-friendly version of the act and reviewed a plan to present to the Members' Services Board. Past and present members of this working group are Abeer Ahmad, Ashley Cummings, Victoria Holmes, Samreen Ahmad, Yebin Park, and Chantai Minet. These examples, among many more, remind us of the power of youth engagement. Young people want to be meaningfully involved when it comes to decisions that affect them.

Today, we urge all Yukoners to look at how to enhance the implementation of children's rights in policies and practice. This last year has shown us that they are already speaking up loudly and boldly. It's our turn to listen.

Applause

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will proceed at this time with the Order Paper.

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like to ask the Legislative Assembly to put out a warm welcome to some individuals who are here today for our geoscience tribute. With us today are Brianne Warner, new executive director for the Yukon Chamber of Mines — it's great to have you here today; Mr. Mike Burke, a stalwart within the mining sector in many different leadership roles. I also believe Randy Lewis is here with us today; Anne Lewis is with us today; and I think — I couldn't tell from the mask. I was going to send a note to your brother. Welcome today.

Ms. White: Today I invite my colleagues to welcome some visitors in the back row. It seems fitting, as we talk about National Child Day, that Eleanor Maunder is here for her very first attendance, prior to one, so it's exciting to have her. She is joined today by her mother, Shelby, and her aunt, Kristy Bader, so thank you so much for joining us today.

Mr. Dixon: I will help the Minister of Economic Development out on the last name that he missed. It's my sister, Bonnie Dixon, who has also joined us.

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Yukon Geoscience Forum

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government and the New Democratic Party to pay tribute to the 49th annual Yukon Geoscience Forum that was

scheduled to take place here in Whitehorse from Saturday, November 20 to Tuesday, November 23. This year's event was cancelled in light of the recent increase in COVID-19 cases; however, I want to recognize the efforts of the Yukon Chamber of Mines and all of the organizers.

The event showcases the best of Yukon's mining industry and the Government of Yukon's commitment to mineral exploration and mine development. Participating in and contributing to the Geoscience Forum is just one way that we can demonstrate our support for the mineral sector.

The Geoscience Forum is an opportunity for geologists, prospectors, miners, and government representatives to connect on matters of interest to the mineral industry. The forum provides a venue for the industry to share information on its activities with Yukon First Nations and Yukoners. Each year, corporate presentations highlight new mineral discoveries as well as the many contributions that the mining sector makes to the Yukon, from employment opportunities to investment in social programs and skills training for youth. The forum's trade show enables delegates to meet with the business community and mining service sector.

Preliminary results of the Yukon's mineral exploration program, which supported 52 early-stage hard rock and placer exploration projects, were going to be presented at the forum, and the mining industry continues to provide substantial benefits to our territory. Mining and exploration support our economy with employment opportunities to Yukoners in our rural communities. The work of the chamber has helped to maximize those benefits.

The Yukon Chamber of Mines has been an active force in our territory since 1943. While much has changed in the mining industry since then, the chamber has remained the central organization that unites industry partners and voices their common interests. Their work to advance responsible mineral development for the benefit of all Yukoners deserves recognition.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the Yukon Chamber of Mines for the tremendous work that they do in organizing the forum. I want to put a congratulations out to the new president of the Yukon Chamber of Mines, Loree Johnstone, who has been a great leader in the sector. I want to thank all of the partners involved for making this difficult decision to protect the health and safety of Yukoners, which the sector has done from the start of this pandemic. While this event won't be going forward this year, I look forward to the Geoscience Forum returning in 2022 for their 50th anniversary.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the Yukon mining industry and the incredible contributions that the industry makes to our territory. The Geoscience Forum and tradeshow has been a major event for industry in years past.

It has allowed governments, miners, geologists, and others involved in mining the opportunity to network and showcase their work to key industry players from throughout the territory and beyond. With all due respect to our friends in the Northwest

Territories, I would definitely say that the Geoscience Forum and trade show is the premier mining geology conference in Canada's north and one of the best in the country.

There are so many fun and exciting things to do at geoscience for all ages. This year, while the difficult decision had to be made to cancel geoscience in light of the recent territorial outbreak and subsequent restrictions, I am happy to be able to stand in recognition of those who make valuable contributions to the Yukon's economy in so many ways.

Mining brings more than just money to our territory. Mining and exploration provide training, opportunities for Yukoners, jobs, partnerships, education opportunities, and so much more. Immense contributions and support come from industry partners to benefit our communities, our charities, and our organizations.

So, a huge thank you to the Yukon Chamber of Mines and their contractors for their efforts in organizing this year's event. In spite of the disappointing news, we will be looking forward to coming together again in 2022 to celebrate the many successes of our mining industry.

Mr. Speaker, there is gold in them thar hills.

Applause

In recognition of Make a Will Month

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to recognize Make a Will Month, highlighted every November in the Yukon Territory. Make a Will Month is intended to raise awareness of the importance of having a will in place and to encourage all Yukoners to consider creating a legally valid will.

A will is an expression of your wishes for after you have passed away. It is used to communicate who you want to care for your children, how your assets and property should be distributed, and any specific instructions on funeral arrangements or perhaps a celebration of life, as just some of the details. Having a will creates certainty for family and friends during a very difficult time. It can alleviate stress and provide clarity on how to manage your estate. It can ensure that family and friends have comfort in knowing that they were able to fulfill your wishes.

If you die without a will, you will have died — what is known as — “intestate”. Dying intestate means that the government must use territorial laws to decide how to distribute your estate to surviving relatives and must appoint an executor. While it may be challenging to sit and think about what you would write in your will, it is crucial to do so in order for proper instructions to be left for managing your estate and your financial affairs, as well as for parental and legal responsibilities for your children.

According to a poll conducted by Angus Reid Institute in 2018, 51 percent of Canadians do not have a will in place, and a further 15 percent noted that the will they did have was out of date. Some of the reasons for not having a will included that they thought they were too young to worry about it, they didn't have enough assets, it was too expensive to prepare a will, they did not want to think about death, and it was too time-consuming to do so.

As a society, we span several generations, we lead complex lives, we raise families, we own properties, and we work for businesses and own businesses. Throughout November, it is important to remind Yukoners about Make a Will Month and to help them do so. None of us know what the future has in store for us. We should all plan on how we want to take care of our family and our friends by having a will.

Yukoners can visit yukon.ca for more information and for resources on wills and estates. You can also visit the Yukon Public Legal Education Association website, which hosts a wealth of information for Yukoners. It is located at yplea.com.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I hope that this tribute today encourages lots of Yukoners to sort out their affairs through a will and make sure that their family and friends know what their wishes are.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition to recognize November as Make a Will Month in the Yukon. Make a Will Month began in 2015 to raise awareness of the value and importance of a will to provide certainty and assurance after your passing. Particularly important for people to know are the difficulties that family members may face in dealing with the estate and wishes of a person who has passed without a will in place.

A will is, of course, a written document that sets out how you would like your assets dealt with or distributed and addresses such matters as guardianship of children and preferences for burial or cremation service arrangements, and it can also address what should be done with any debts and liabilities that you may have. Often parents may not have thought about legally defining their wishes in terms of guardianship for their children. It is important and there is no time like the present to start planning out how you would like matters dealt with. There are resources available to help you get started on a will, and you can contact the public guardian and trustee with questions around wills and estates.

Thank you to all who are taking the time to assist Yukoners in getting organized to create wills this month. I would also like to thank and acknowledge those people who were involved in starting wills month in 2015.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate Make a Will Month.

Until recently, I, like many people, thought that I didn't really need a will. I thought that the default was that my assets would just go to my next of kin. Unfortunately, as my colleagues have mentioned, it isn't that simple. Without a will, the process is longer and more complicated, with confusion at every step. In my mind, the primary reason to write a will is to make things as easy as possible for your loved ones in a difficult time.

I know that there are many Yukoners who are struggling to keep their head above water, and writing a will is the last thing on their mind — I get that. But, if you do have a little time and

a little mental space that you can set aside to making a will, it is worth it.

That said, it is not actually the easiest thing to do. I did search the Yukon government website this morning and found some information about wills but no instructions or support on how to write one. I found a document from the Yukon Public Legal Education Association, which is a great resource, but it was last updated almost 20 years ago, in 2003.

This is a question of equality. People should be able to get support to write a will, even if they can't afford a lawyer. They shouldn't be punished with a more convoluted process, just because of their financial situation. I urge the government to make writing a will an easy, supported process to encourage as many Yukoners as possible to complete their will.

The time after losing someone is a hard, sad time. Having a will can take away some of the burden of legalities and let people spend their energy on grieving and healing. This month is a good reminder to the Yukon government and to all Yukoners that they have a role to play in making that a reality.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling a letter from the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, better known by its acronym, CPAWS, in support of the proposed better building program.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I have for tabling, pursuant to section 23(2) of the *Housing Corporation Act*, the Yukon Housing Corporation 2020-21 annual report.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees? Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 7 — received

Clerk: Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly: I have had the honour to review a petition, being Petition No. 7 of the First Session of the 35th Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Leader of the Third Party on November 17, 2021.

The petition presented by the Leader of the Third Party meets the requirements as to form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Speaker: Accordingly, I declare Petition No. 7 is deemed to be read and received. Pursuant to Standing Order 67, the Executive Council shall provide a response to a petition which has been read and received within eight sitting days of this presentation. Therefore, the Executive Council response to Petition No. 7 shall be provided on or before December 1, 2021.

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Dixon: I rise to give notice of the following motion: THAT this House urges the chair of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges to call a meeting of that committee before 12:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 23, 2021.

Mr. Kent: I rise to give notice of the following motion: THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to change the minimum age for proof of vaccination to access designated settings from 12 years old to 12 years plus four months in order to:

(1) align with Transport Canada rules for boarding domestic flights and trains in Canada; and

(2) allow 12-year-olds waiting to get fully vaccinated to continue to access all designated settings, including participating in organized sports, playing music or singing, dance recitals, or accessing restaurants.

Mr. Cathers: I rise today to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to create a territorially appointed chief firearms officer to replace the current position that is appointed by the Government of Canada.

Ms. McLeod: I rise today to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Community Services to explain why he reneged on the commitment he made publicly to call the *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)* for second reading today.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government House Leader to call the *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)* for second reading on Monday, November 22, 2021.

Ms. Blake: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to release details on the algorithm that determines who is eligible for a rapid COVID-19 test.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to meet with the Yukon Medical Association to address their concerns regarding the implementation of the Meditech Expanse program.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Prenatal nutrition program

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am pleased to rise in the House today to inform Yukoners that our Liberal government has met our platform commitment to match federal funding for Canada

prenatal nutrition program operating in the Yukon. The Yukon has eight Canada prenatal nutrition programs, which collectively receive \$677,000 per year in financial support from the Government of Canada. Our Yukon government will now be matching those funds going forward.

The Canada prenatal nutrition program provides much-needed support to expectant Yukoners. The programs operate in Carcross, Dawson City, Teslin, and Watson Lake, and four programs operate in Whitehorse. These programs provide prenatal and postnatal support, which includes free prenatal vitamins, information on nutrition during and after pregnancy, and breastfeeding support. Programs also offer peer support for new and expectant people.

Each program is customized by organizers to meet the needs of clients they serve. For instance, Les EssentiElles provide support in French for our francophone population, and the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre offers a traditional parenting program. The Teen Parent Centre, which also runs a program, has customized its support to meet the needs of their younger clientele.

Ensuring that pregnant people and developing babies receive proper nutrition is very important for the health of both the pregnant person and the baby. It also helps to provide babies with a good foundation for a strong and healthy life. Above and beyond the practicalities of proper nutrition, providing peer support and assistance is very important for helping expectant people and new parents to get through what can be a very emotional and challenging time. Having someone to ask questions, get reassurance from, and help to navigate being a new parent is a lifeline for many new parents.

I would also like to announce additional funding that our government has provided to the Council of Yukon First Nations. For the next two fiscal years, we will be providing CYFN with \$262,000 each year. This funding will be used to research and identify Yukon First Nation prenatal and infant support needs in communities, enabling First Nations to develop culturally relevant prenatal and infant programming and to assist in identifying the needs of high-risk expectant people. The funding will also be used to fill a position to assist the Yukon First Nation prenatal and infant supports.

We are excited to offer this funding to support both expectant Yukoners and infants. Supporting new and expectant parents sets the foundation for strong, healthy families and communities.

Mr. Cathers: This is a promise that the Liberals made in their 2016 election platform and then did nothing about for years. Then, in the budget speech this spring, they announced the funding. In their 2021 platform, they flew the “mission accomplished” banner for this commitment and claimed that it was already done.

It’s disappointing that the Deputy Premier is focused on re-announcing old news instead of doing her job and focusing on fixing major problems in her portfolio. Over one-fifth of Yukoners — 2,472 people — are on the wait-list for a family doctor. Some are desperate, yet she has been unable to point to a single real action that she has taken to encourage more family

doctors to move to the Yukon. When asked what physician incentive and support programs that we put in place were still actually there and what the current levels are, she couldn't tell us. As an example of the neglect, the medical education bursary for Yukon students has been cut to half of what it was when I announced it 15 years ago.

The Liberals got rid of the physician recruitment position, and she still won't commit to reinstating it as a first step. Clearly, fixing the serious family doctor shortage isn't a priority for the Deputy Premier. Meanwhile, desperate Yukoners are contacting reporters about the family doctor crisis. One person said: "I am going to die sooner, because right now ... the model of the medical care is, 'don't come see to us until you're really, really sick' ... That quite literally means this health care system is shortening my life."

Another was quoted saying: "I feel very betrayed. I feel betrayed by a system that I have supported all my life."

While thousands of Yukoners without a doctor are forced to go to the emergency room, we learned from Yukon Hospital Corporation witnesses this week that the government left them short millions of dollars that they need again. They told us that their budget for this year is \$98 million, not including COVID costs. The government is giving them millions less. The minister is also failing Yukon women who need OB/GYN services. There were two OB/GYN doctors providing service, but currently one is on leave, meaning the entire Yukon is currently served by only a single OB/GYN specialist.

In response to questions from my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek Centre, about this, the Deputy Premier talked about regulating midwifery, suggesting that this was somehow a solution to long wait times for women needing to access the OB/GYN program and the lack of doctors. We support midwifery, but a midwife can't provide some of the critical services, such as C-sections, that an OB/GYN provides.

Speaking of midwifery, congratulations to the Liberals on banning unregulated midwifery and failing to deliver on their commitment to hire midwives months ago. Yukon women who wanted access to midwifery this year were left without the service and, for the first time in decades, the Yukon doesn't have a single practising midwife. The Liberals have refused the request to provide a funding structure that would allow midwives in private practice to continue to offer services.

Mr. Speaker, we would like to see the minister focus on these important areas instead of on old promises from 2016 that they are just getting around to now.

Ms. Blake: The health of a mother and their child starts well before birth. Every mother and unborn child should have access to the best care, the right support, and good nutrition. It is great to see that more funding will be provided to programs in Carcross, Dawson, Teslin, Watson Lake, and Whitehorse. Prenatal nutrition programs across the Yukon have been working extremely hard. They have had to adapt to the pandemic and rising costs to ensure health and well-being for all of their clients, but there are still so many hurdles.

I only have to look at my own community where groceries are available through the co-op but are increasingly expensive.

For a pregnant person living in Beaver Creek, getting groceries involves a long round trip to Whitehorse with the added cost of gas and sometimes overnight accommodations.

There are good programs in Whitehorse, and I acknowledge and thank the staff at the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre. These programs are where conversations unfold, healthy meals are shared, and community is built. Healthy diets and supports should not end with the birth of a child but, because of COVID, many have. Unfortunately, many programs — both prenatal and postnatal — have been cancelled or impacted by COVID. This has left new and expecting parents feeling isolated. Important services like infant immunization have been cancelled or delayed as nurses and other health care workers have had to work elsewhere in response to each new wave of COVID in the territory. All of these services are essential, pandemic or not.

By offering supports upstream, we are setting parents and young Yukoners up for success. It is our responsibility to do as much as we can for mother and baby during and after birth in every Yukon community.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: First of all, I would like to say that it is fitting that we are here on National Child Day, and I am very happy that there is a youngster in our gallery. I am disappointed that the remarks of the Official Opposition ignored the importance of prenatal care for Yukon families, new parents, and infants.

What is important for Yukoners to know, and what they deserve to know, is that our government is committed to supporting Yukoners throughout their lives, starting with birth. We know that a healthy pregnancy is a path to a healthy birth. The Canada prenatal nutrition program helps to provide that pathway for pregnant Yukoners, new mothers, and their babies during the early stages of parenthood and life.

Since being elected in 2016, our government has been working to ensure that expectant parents can access prenatal services in their communities. Today's announcement is long overdue. Canada prenatal nutrition programs in the Yukon have not received an increase in funding in almost 20 years. During their 14 years in governance, the Yukon Party was asked repeatedly by providers to boost funding for prenatal and infant supports, and they refused to do so. That is why our government is stepping up now to ensure that new parents and infants get the support that they need in what are arguably the foundational years of anyone's life.

I am very proud to say that, going forward, we will match the federal funding on an ongoing basis to support the eight Canada prenatal nutrition programs in the Yukon, but in addition, we are also stepping up to provide the Council of Yukon First Nations with funding to provide First Nations with prenatal and infant supports in their communities in a way that is culturally relevant and meaningful to them.

Ensuring that First Nation parents and infants can get parental and infant supports in a way that embraces their cultural values is truly incredibly important. Our government will continue to support parents and newborns in ensuring that they get the support they need in a way that they need it most.

By focusing on better health outcomes and client services for Yukoners, we will be able to reduce the inequities in our health system that often fall on the shoulders of those for whom the support is needed most.

Today's announcement is a good first step in doing that for Yukon parents and newborns. I hope that we all know how important good prenatal care is to children's ultimate development, and our goal is to provide Yukon families with that kind of support.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Before proceeding to Question Period today, the Chair would like to deliver a ruling regarding a point of order that was raised during Question Period on November 17, 2021 by the Government House Leader.

In the course of asking his first question, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin stated: "So, the Minister of Education has been consistently called out by stakeholders this fall for sharing inaccurate information with Yukoners. Whether this is deliberate or just a case of the minister not being aware of what her department is doing, we will leave her to explain."

This statement uses a roundabout way to say that the minister is deliberately misleading the House, and is out of order. Members cannot do indirectly that which they cannot do directly. This is not the first time such a construction has been ruled out of order. For example, members can refer to the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole's ruling on pages 1038 to 1039 of the Hansard for March 12, 2020. I would ask the members to refrain from using this form in the future.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Physician recruitment and retention

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under this Liberal Minister of Health and Social Services, the health care system in the Yukon has gotten significantly worse. On August 23 this year, the minister wrote us, indicating that the wait-list for a family doctor was a massive 2,000 people. This morning, CBC reported the wait-list for a doctor has skyrocketed to nearly 2,500 people. That's nearly 500 more people waiting for a doctor that it has grown in less than three months under this minister's watch. This is a health care crisis.

Will the Minister of Health and Social Services recognize that the Liberal government's actions to date have been completely inadequate at addressing this issue and that her inaction on getting more family doctors is directly contributing to this health care crisis?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, again, I see — the members opposite think that they are being somewhat clever. I actually won't agree with that. I won't agree that there has been Liberal inaction, I don't believe that there has been government inaction, and frankly, I know that is not in fact the case. I have answered this question before, and I'm very happy to answer it again with respect to the important work of making sure that Yukoners have primary health care.

The *Putting People First* report found that, as I've said before, approximately 21 percent of Yukoners do not have access to primary care providers — the member opposite has spoken previously about that being one in five. That is not the math. It's actually one in 20, or approximately two percent of Yukoners. Is that an okay number? Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker, and we are working hard to make sure that primary care physicians and other health care professionals — remembering that, in some places in the territory, we have nurse practitioners and other health care professionals who can provide service for Yukoners.

I have spoken recently with the president of the Canadian Medical Association, our very own Dr. Katharine Smart. We had an excellent conversation about two days ago, and this was one of the topics on our agenda, and I will continue, hopefully, with the answer.

Mr. Cathers: The minister herself has admitted that 21 percent of Yukoners don't have a family doctor. That's over one-fifth. We have seen the doctor shortage skyrocket under this Health and Social Services minister, and she seems to think that it's not a big deal.

In the last two and a half months, the wait-list to get a family doctor has increased by nearly 500 people. This means that more Yukoners are having to go to the emergency room for primary health care needs. This fall, the number of people going to the ER for non-emergency care has nearly doubled. This is negatively impacting the health of Yukoners.

One Yukoner told CBC this morning — and I quote: "I am going to die sooner, because right now ... the model of the medical care is, 'don't come to see us until you're really, really sick'..." This is a staggering indictment of the Liberals' mismanagement of our health care system and neglect to the importance of family doctors.

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us a single thing that she has done since taking this job that has alleviated the doctor shortage?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Again, I'm very pleased to be able to speak to Yukoners about this important issue. The staggering neglect of doctor shortages began long before our government took this role on, but, yet again, we will work hard to resolve it.

The people-centred approach of *Putting People First* — and the independent report with respect to the review of the health care system here in the territory — has provided a road map — 76 recommendations — and a road map to proceed with significantly shifting the way in which primary medical care has been provided throughout the years — not only here, but across Canada.

Let's note that the doctor shortage is a national problem. I have spoken recently with Dr. Katharine Smart, the president of the Canadian Medical Association, and this was actually the very first item on our agenda, because it is a national shortage, and our work together, going forward, we hope — we will work with the Canadian Medical Association, with the Yukon Medical Association, and ultimately with individuals and places where doctors are educated so that we might be able to work together to provide a response to what is a significant national shortage of medical professionals.

Mr. Cathers: The Liberals have had five years in office, and the family doctor shortage is getting worse under this minister's watch. The Liberals have directly contributed to the health care crisis and doctor shortage. They cut the doctor recruitment program. They got rid of the doctor recruitment website, and the medical education bursary for Yukon students is just half of what it was 15 years ago. What are the results of these Liberal decisions? The wait-list for a family doctor has skyrocketed to about 2,500 people. It has gotten so bad that one Yukoner was quoted on CBC this morning stating that, because of this doctor shortage, they will have to leave the Yukon. They went on to say: "I have received some long-term service awards, and I would like to give them back to..." — the Premier — "... and his crew and say, 'thank you for nothing.'"

So, I will ask again: Can the Liberals point to a single thing that they have done that has reduced the wait-list for doctors or encouraged family doctors to move to the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Unfortunately, in the short period of time here, I don't have — I can list many opportunities that have been provided by this government to address this medical shortage: the "find a doctor" program, the bilingual health centre, expansion of midwifery, et cetera.

But let me speak for a moment about our government's commitment to supporting individuals who are pursuing health-related education to receive financial support. We are pleased to offer financial supports through the medical education bursary, the nursing education bursary, and the health profession education bursary programs; \$89,000 is available for 16 new health-related education bursary recipients each year through the Department of Health and Social Services. If you listened to the member opposite, you would think that this was a program that had disappeared and was not available. While recipients of these bursaries are not required to deliver services in the Yukon following the completion of their education, we do anticipate that these recipients do return to deliver services to Yukoners. These three education bursary programs represent just one part of our overall funding to support health care recruitment and retention.

Question re: COVID-19 rapid testing

Mr. Dixon: Over the last two weeks, the Liberal government's policy on rapid testing has changed dramatically. Last week, the Minister of Health and Social Services told the Legislature — and I quote: "The acting chief medical officer of health is not currently recommending the use of rapid tests at schools." Then, this week, the same minister said — and I quote: "We do, in fact, have rapid testing" — and that it is being used in the schools.

So, my question is simple: Why does the government's message on rapid testing keep changing?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Unfortunately, I think that it is the opposition that is sometimes stirring confusion with respect to these issues, and I am happy to rise to be able to speak to the issues of rapid testing, which are incredibly important to Yukoners. Science is the best guide when dealing with this pandemic, and we continue to follow the recommendations of our public health experts.

Our strong leadership has guided us through this pandemic and will keep doing so. Our focus as a government remains on protecting the health and safety of Yukoners. We understand the concerns of parents and concerns around cases in our schools. What we have heard recently from the acting chief medical officer of health is that, while there are a large number of cases in children under the age of 12, they have not been spreading through schools. We have heard from many constituents about this issue and have shared their concerns with the acting chief medical officer of health. We continue to work with our public health officials to adjust our response as necessary.

Rapid testing is available when there is an outbreak in a location. In addition, we have heard this week that rapid testing is recommended if teachers want to have that option going forward.

Mr. Dixon: Quite frankly, it seems that the Liberals are changing their position so frequently — it seems that the "science" they are following is political science.

Parents in schools have been pushing the government on this, and it appears to be working, because their tune has changed. Last week, the new Government House Leader told the Legislature that, when it comes to rapid testing — and I quote — that "... could overwhelm the rest of testing system, which you want to keep available to support those Yukoners who are symptomatic — so there are risks." But then this week, the Premier said that there is — and I quote: "... rapid testing available to all Yukoners."

So, Mr. Speaker, can the Premier tell us whether or not what he said was true? Is rapid testing indeed available to all Yukoners, and how do Yukoners go about accessing these rapid tests that he said are available to all of us?

Hon. Mr. Silver: With all due respect to members opposite as they take quotes here and there and put them together, we need constant information to be crystal clear in the Legislative Assembly. Our comments about rapid testing being available — yes, they are available, and the science behind that is: When there are outbreaks, there is rapid testing.

Mr. Dixon: It appears that the Premier completely ignored my question.

The Liberals are completely mismanaging the communications on this, as their message has been changing daily. I will refer to a *Whitehorse Star* article yesterday about the Liberal government's flip-flop on rapid testing. The YTA president said that he spoke to the Government House Leader on Monday and that he gave him a flat "No" on the issue of testing for teachers. Then, the very next day, the Minister of Health and Social Services said that rapid testing is available to any teacher who shows up at the testing centre with symptoms.

In response, the president of the YTA said — and I quote: "None of that has been presented to us..." Whether it's opposition parties, parents, or teachers, Yukoners are realizing that this government is spinning out of control and are starting to wonder what else the government is going to flip-flop on.

So, will the government tell Yukoners clearly: What exactly is the policy when it comes to rapid testing, and will that policy change again next week?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I did talk with the Yukon Teachers' Association president. I had a great conversation with him on Monday. I did talk with the *Whitehorse Star* yesterday. The conversation that we had was with unions and around whether we could use rapid testing and personal protective equipment instead of vaccines — so as a prophylaxis — and the answer to that is no. I tabled those recommendations from the chief medical officer of health here in the Legislature yesterday, so — no, where it's about a replacement for vaccines; yes, where it's about an outbreak.

I believe that the chief medical officer of health has been pretty consistent with that language when she talks to the media and on the weekly updates.

So, if there's an outbreak, yes, we then do bring in rapid testing. We have done it in our communities over the last year and a half; we have done it where there are outbreaks. Rapid testing is here; we'll continue to use it where it's indicated by the chief medical officer of health.

Question re: COVID-19 vaccine and safety measures

Ms. Tredger: There is a major gap in the vaccine mandate. While parents soon will be able to drop their children off at school and feel confident in the knowledge that everyone working in that building will be vaccinated, parents of children in daycares, day homes, and private programs do not have the same certainty.

Mr. Speaker, daycare-aged children are just as vulnerable to COVID as every other child. There have been multiple closures of childcare facilities in the last month, and yet none of these workers will have to be vaccinated under the vaccine mandate. Why are children attending daycare not being given the same protections as children in schools?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I'm happy to stand and reply to the question on the floor today regarding our childcare centres. The health and safety of children and families is always our first priority, as I've said many times during this Sitting. Licensed childcare centres continue to provide valued high-quality service for our community, especially essential workers during this challenging time, and I thank them for their work over the last 20 months in a very challenging time.

The chief medical officer of health has provided clear guidance for Yukon licensed childcare centres, school-age programs, and family day homes for COVID-19.

The director of the Early Learning and Child Care unit made the chief medical officer of health's recommended guidelines compulsory, and this was communicated to licensed operators at the end of August. If a COVID-19 case is connected to a childcare centre, operators will receive information and instruction directly from Yukon Communicable Disease Control. YCDC will contact families and staff directly regarding matters connecting — if there is a positive test. We will be working to clarify how the mandatory vaccination policy may apply to licensed day-home settings, and we'll share more information as it comes.

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, there are new cases every day and widespread community transmission, and the end is

nowhere in sight. Right now, Yukon parents are being forced to choose between the risk of their children getting COVID-19 or staying home from work long term. We need to protect every child in the Yukon, including the ones who are too young to go to school. It is a simple decision but, from the minister's answer, I am not even clear on whether daycare workers are required to be vaccinated or not.

Will the minister include all early years professionals in the vaccine mandate?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, again, we will continue working to clarify how mandatory vaccine policy may apply to licensed daycare settings, and we will share more information as it's available with operators. The department definitely coordinates its COVID-19 response through an education emergency response team, which is in place to oversee the implementation of health and safety guidelines and our education recovery plan and as needed to deal with positive cases in schools and daycares. A member of this team has been embedded in the Department of Health and Social Services and will continue to work closely with their officials and the chief medical officer of health to move forward with appropriate responses. We continue to provide ongoing support to the licensed childcare providers for enhanced cleaning and to assist in meeting all pandemic public health guidelines and requirements.

We greatly appreciate, of course, the efforts that have been taken by all involved. It is an important and essential service to Yukon families. Again, we will continue working to clarify mandatory vaccination policies as they may apply to licensed daycares and other settings such as this.

Ms. Tredger: We have heard from daycare workers and parents who are under the impression that the vaccine mandate does not apply to daycare staff. Now it sounds like that might not be true, but there is not clarity on that yet. We are a week and one-half away from November 30, and it sounds like there could be entire organizations that fall under a vaccine mandate and don't even know it. This is a mess.

Why is the minister not communicating to daycares now about their vaccine requirements?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, as I started out with in this reply, we continue to work with the chief medical officer of health. They have provided clear guidelines to day homes. The director of the Early Learning and Child Care unit has made all of that available and compulsory and this was communicated to the licensed operators earlier this year.

I have been clear about where we're at with this in terms of — if those recommendations come, they will be communicated with the licensed daycare settings, and that information — as it becomes available, we will communicate that to them. As it stands, there are current guidelines that are in place, and those are clear right now.

One of the things I would like to just point out is that yesterday in the Legislative Assembly we had a great opportunity to debate mandatory vaccination, and the members opposite voted to not have that debate, and so —

Some Hon. Members : (Inaudible)

Speaker: Order, please, the member has the floor.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I see the rumbling across the way, and thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for speaking to that, because we did have a great opportunity yesterday to have a very thorough discussion, and all members opposite us voted not to have that.

Speaker: Order, please.

Question re: Land development

Mr. Hassard: We have talked about the doctor shortage that the Liberals' mismanagement has contributed to; now let's talk about the housing shortage they are also contributing to.

On May 18, the Minister of Community Services said — and I quote: "... we have work underway on phase 6 of Whistle Bend for completion this summer. It will create some 171 lots for a planned release later this fall."

Mr. Speaker, it's November 18 now, there is snow on the ground, and the Liberals haven't lived up to the commitment to release those 171 lots. We asked about the Liberal mismanagement of this earlier this week and the minister confirmed it's now going to only be approximately 100 lots, and he couldn't even give a clear timeline for when they are coming out.

Can the minister tell us why the Liberals have cut back the number of lots they are releasing this year?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to discuss all of the work that this government is doing on housing across the territory.

The member opposite has opened this door and I am more than happy to step through it, because this government has created more lots in the last four years than the previous government did in several years more than that. We have done all that we can to make sure that we have enough housing lots for the people of the territory, for the growing economy that we are seeing throughout this.

I might remind the members opposite that this economy is perhaps the only one that saw the greatest growth throughout the pandemic than any other economy in the country. That is putting pressure on our housing stock, and we are dealing with it as we can.

In 2020-21, 262 Whistle Bend lots and five country residential lots were released and sold in one lottery — one lottery, Mr. Speaker. There were 779 applications received for 147 single-family lots. There were 91 townhouse lots, 11 multi-family lots, and eight commercial lots released. I challenge the members opposite to come up with stats like that. I am happy to talk about this going forward.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I think maybe the minister should have said he "stepped in it", rather than "through it".

We have established that the Liberals promised in the spring that 171 lots would be released this fall. We have established that not only are they late getting these lots out, they won't even be releasing them.

Let's move on to some more broken promises by the Liberals on land development.

Again, on May 18, the minister said, "The phase 7 construction tender just closed. It will supply another 90 residential lots targeted for the release in the fall of 2022."

The only problem is that he terminated that tender and now the release of those lots is going to be late as well. So, can the minister explain why he terminated this tender and how long those 90 lots will be delayed for?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, so much invective — so much invective. I really do enjoy talking with my colleague opposite. We weren't able to talk in the spring session because he had been benched, but this afternoon I am happy to have him back in the roster and able to talk to him now that he has been brought out of Coventry.

Construction is wrapping up for this building season and the lots have been completed. Let me repeat that, Mr. Speaker: Construction is wrapping up for this season and lots have been completed. This will allow for the preparation for the release by lottery later this year of 97 Whistle Bend lots, 70 phase 6A lots consisting of 38 single-family and 32 townhouse lots, and 27 commercial lots on Keno Way. We will also be releasing four single-family lots in Logan, just down the street from my house, three lots in Mayo, and three in downtown Dawson City. Whistle Bend phases 7 and 8 and lift station tenders are targeted for release in the fall and winter of 2021-22 and phase 9 in the early summer of 2022. Phase 6B: 101 lots; phases 7A and 8: 80 to 100 lots are targeted for release in 2022, followed by phase 9 in 2023.

Mr. Speaker, this government is working hard on the housing front. I know that my colleague, the minister for housing, has lots to say on this matter as well. We are working very, very hard across this territory to create lots for Yukoners because the economy is so strong that we have lots of people coming.

Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the minister is looking for humour in this because it is not funny for Yukon citizens. Under the Liberal watch, the price of a house has skyrocketed by almost \$90,000 in one year and the Liberals' mismanagement of getting lots out in a timely fashion is directly contributing to the housing affordability crisis, as they are not keeping up with demand.

The Liberals are late getting phase 6 in Whistle Bend out and they are late in getting phase 7 out. Now, let's move on to phase 8 and phase 9. In the spring, the minister said — and I quote: "We are anticipating tendering phases 8 and 9 this year, as well as a lift station."

Can the minister tell us where the tenders for phases 8 and phase 9 are? Why are they late and why has he been unable to live up to a single commitment that he has made since becoming minister with respect to land development?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, what I would like to share with the House today, as we look at housing and lot development, is that it is a multi-pronged approach. First of all, of course, you have seen record lot development over the last number of years — record investment in lot development. We are also in a position right now, between Boreal Commons — our partnership extension with Da Daghay — Normandy cornerstone — the largest investment in Yukon history in affordable housing, which is also underway.

The other commitment that we have made, and it was discussed and debated in the previous mandate, is that we would be working with the private sector on land development — not just the way of doing things that we have seen for decades, where the government was overseeing all the lot development, but actually putting land into the hands of the private sector.

I know that, over the next number of months, we will be rolling out a number of those projects, and I think that this will be extremely substantial. That is, again, going to be added onto the work that we're doing on lot development.

The first thing that comes to mind is that we are trying to catch up when it comes to social housing and affordable housing. When there is a big cash investment from the federal government, you want to seize that, and that is what we are trying to do now. We are trying to make sure that the private sector has good opportunities, and we don't want to cancel things.

Previously, all of the projects that were here in the Yukon were cancelled. That had us trying to catch up, and that is what we are doing.

Question re: Teacher staffing

Mr. Kent: So, Liberal mismanagement has led to doctor shortages, housing shortages, and now it's also leading to teacher shortages. Yukon teachers began ringing the alarm bell about the significant teacher shortage back in the summer. They told the government that teacher absenteeism was going to be a big issue this school year due to the isolation requirements of COVID. We have seen this play out exactly as they said, with the predictable results of teacher shortages and burnout.

Can the Minister of Education tell us of any concrete steps that the Liberals have taken to actually address this growing crisis in our schools?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to stand and speak about our schools and the educators within them. Effective teachers are one of the most important factors in student success at school, and we work hard to attract and retain the best educators. I want to thank all of the administrators, educators, and staff who are working so hard for the benefit of our students and all Yukoners. I have had an opportunity to meet with many of the school councils this fall and have more to come, for sure. I have heard the issues raised directly. I know that our administration is working very hard with each and every school to mitigate the challenges that they have.

I am inspired by some of the innovation that I have seen at our schools in terms of — even through a pandemic, they are incredibly resilient and innovative and working hard toward the well-being and the education of our young people, which is just inspiring. I will continue to build on my answer as I go forward.

Mr. Kent: So, the minister spoke about mitigations and innovation, but she didn't identify any concrete steps that they have taken to actually address this growing crisis in our schools, which is the question that I asked.

Yesterday, the CBC reported that pay for teachers on call was among the lowest in the country. As we have heard, the demand for teachers on call has skyrocketed as more and more

teachers are forced to isolate due to COVID exposures. We have heard from the minister that technical problems in the government's TOC system have caused some faults, but surely it would be hard to convince people to become teachers on call if we pay among the lowest rates in the country.

What have the Liberals done to address the shortage of teachers on call?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Definitely, teachers on call are a very big part of our response to the challenges that we have been facing with COVID-19. This is the third school year impacted by COVID-19, and we acknowledge the stress of the pandemic and the fatigue that many are feeling. We acknowledge that increased staff absenteeism due to COVID-19 and the requirements to stay home when sick or in care of children while self-isolating is an additional challenge that has caused increased pressures on school staffing.

Our administration works closely with each and every school. We have a touch-base every single morning. Any schools that have notifications for COVID-19 are checked in on and ensured that they have the resources to be able to proceed with the day's activities.

Teachers on call are very valued. They are playing a key role in supporting our schools through short-term absenteeism and by providing coverage through the pandemic. Right now, we have 201 registered teachers on call. Again, I will continue building on my answer in the next question.

Mr. Kent: With due respect to the minister, rather than continuing to build on these briefing notes, we're looking for specific actions with respect to the teacher shortages and the substitute teacher shortages that the Yukon faces.

One clear solution to reducing the amount of time that teachers need to spend isolating is to allow rapid testing for teachers. As you know, the Liberals have completely bungled the communications around rapid testing. After refusing to allow rapid testing for weeks, they haphazardly announced at a school council meeting that teachers would, indeed, be given eligibility for rapid testing at the COVID testing centre in Whitehorse, but unfortunately, they forgot to tell the teachers.

When he learned of this from the media, the president of the Yukon Teachers' Association expressed shock. So, a very simple question for the minister: Why didn't she think to let teachers know that they were eligible for rapid testing?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to stand and speak to this question. I want to be clear that there are very clear processes that are in place in schools. We have followed the guidance of the chief medical officer since day one, actually for the last 20 months, and that hasn't changed this year. We have taken the guidance — we've recently made adjustments to the guidelines in schools, and each and every school does have an operational plan.

When there is a — I've already talked today about how we work with Health and Social Services and that we have staff embedded in the emergency response team on behalf of Education to communicate — if there are confirmed cases of COVID-19 in schools, we follow the guidance of the chief medical officer of health, and Yukon Communicable Disease is the primary communication on these types of cases. When there

is an outbreak in a school, rapid testing is a method that has been used for the past 20 months — all the way through. Whether there is an outbreak in a community or in a school, it is absolutely the method that we have used.

So, I get that the opposition is wanting to spin a narrative around miscommunication. I don't accept that. Yukoners deserve accurate information.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed. We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. Blake): Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 202: *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Education — *continued*

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for the debate that we're about to engage in here this afternoon. I also welcome her officials to the House again today. We just had a brief time at the end of the day yesterday. I did give a bit of a general overview of some of the topics that I wanted to touch on here today.

The first question that I want to ask the minister is — we are less than two weeks away from the vaccine mandate for YG employees, including teachers and those working in our schools. I'm wondering if the minister can give us an update on how many teachers or educators are anticipated to be placed on

leave without pay on December 1 as a result of the incoming vaccine mandate.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to stand and speak to this question around mandatory vaccination of adults in schools. This is, of course, a matter that has been spoken about a great deal over the past several weeks and maybe even months.

We have a duty to lead by example and do our part to keep each other safe from the spread of COVID-19. Yukon government employees will be able to verify — this is one of processes that I wanted to just lay out here — their vaccination status via an online system that has started. This is a new process that, for the Yukon government as an employer — this information will be used to assess the potential impacts on individual schools in weeks ahead. From the reports that we have to date, with all staff in Government of Yukon overall — we have gone live with this now, and over 50 percent of all staff — not just looking at the Department of Education — have attested their vaccine status.

So, we will know more — employees have the opportunity until November 30 to get their first vaccine and to attest within this online service that is now available and live. So, if folks are just hearing about it now, as we are in the Legislative Assembly, I encourage you to do your registration.

This requirement will also be applied, of course, to any adults who volunteer or perform work in schools. We are working with school communities to identify issues and are putting in place contingency plans, should we find ourselves with vacancies in schools — so, the availability of our teachers on call and potential actions to address the situation.

Mr. Kent: I believe that it was the Minister of Highways and Public Works who mentioned, either earlier this week or last week, this attestation period. The Minister of Education has now said that 50 percent of all employees across government have indicated if they are vaccinated or unvaccinated as of, I am assuming, today. Perhaps that's a real-time number.

Of those 50 percent, can the minister give us an idea of how many of those individuals have indicated that they are vaccinated and how many have indicated that they are unvaccinated?

Hon. Ms. McLean: This new system just went live on Monday, so we are really anticipating more reports coming. The information that I received today is that around 50 percent of overall staff within Government of Yukon did their attestation.

When you go into that system, you are asked when your first or second vaccine was taken. We will have more information to come, and we will be producing reports that will be specific to the Yukon Teachers' Association and those who are associated with schools who may not be part of the YTA.

Mr. Kent: So, the minister said that there will be more information to come and that reports will be made available. Respectfully, we are less than two weeks away from December 1, when, my understanding is — with respect to education — teachers and educators in the schools will be placed on leave without pay, and there will have to be some measures put in place to find replacements or deal with that situation.

If the minister can maybe give us an indication on when we can expect to see those reports so that we have a better idea of how many teachers and paraprofessionals in the schools are affected by this vaccine mandate — we have talked quite a bit about staff shortages, and I will get into some more detail on that in a moment. But again, this is a pressing issue. It's less than two weeks away, as I've said, and Yukoners will be quite curious to know how many people will be affected.

So, when can we get those reports that the minister just spoke of?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am giving the information that I have right now, that is in front of me today, and my commitment then will be to follow up. I am happy to bring information forward, either through a legislative return, as the information becomes available, or directly to the Official Opposition Education critic, as that information becomes available to us.

The second part of that was that I really wanted to emphasize, as well, that employees do have — and I want to say this, and I will probably say it a number of times — that employees have the choice right up until November 30 to get their first vaccination and register that with the Government of Yukon.

In terms of the teachers on call, I know that we had some debate around that today in Question Period, and we have had this discussion ongoing. Teachers on call are a very valued part of our education system. They are playing a key role in supporting schools — they have been through the routine short-term absences, as well as providing coverage through the pandemic. All school exposure notices are posted on yukon.ca, of course, so that folks know where we have pressures and to ensure that TOCs are also informed of current COVID-19 cases connected to schools that they may be working in.

We are working with teachers on call to address health and safety concerns and to identify options to ensure that teachers on call are available to support schools through staffing challenges. We did work out some glitches earlier in the year, in terms of just some of the technical difficulties that we were having, in terms of the robo-calling of teachers on call, which was put in place to alleviate some of the burden on administration. We found, through our discussions with the schools assistant deputy minister, but also through our discussions — our meetings — with school councils, that this was an issue that was arising, and we are working every day to address it.

I think that assistant deputy minister Sikkes said it very well, that when he is entering into a school to work with them, the first question asked is: How is your teacher-on-call situation? Things are improving in our schools, and that's what — as of November 15, we have 201 registered teachers on call in Yukon. There are 155 in Whitehorse, 46 are in the communities, with an additional 31 applications pending. That breakdown of those 31 are 23 more in Whitehorse and eight in the communities.

We continue to plan and look at all scenarios around — to be able to be ready to deploy teachers on call post-November 30, if needed in our schools, either in rural or urban

settings. We are looking at all of the plans and adjusting them, as we go forward. As we receive more information from the Public Service Commission, we will be able to better determine what those needs are, but we are preparing.

Mr. Kent: I am sure that, in our capacity as MLAs in all three parties in this House, we have started to hear some stories from Yukon government employees or teachers who have decided not to get vaccinated and will be going on leave without pay. There are some extremely difficult discussions that I am sure we have all had with our constituents.

I know my colleague, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, brought up earlier this Sitting, with respect to Ross River, the fact that they will be losing a number of important individuals in the community, including the individual who provides substitute teacher service. We heard from a rural school this morning that they have six individuals working in the school who it's anticipated will not be vaccinated on December 1, so these individuals will be going on leave without pay as well.

Obviously, this is an incredible concern. Normally, when you're losing this number of individuals — however many, when we end up getting that number back from the minister when she has that information — it's going to be an extremely concerning situation, given the fact that we have talked about teacher-on-call shortages — and staff shortages as well — throughout the system.

I have just a quick question, I guess, on staff shortages as they exist right now: Does the minister have the information with her and can she tell us how many schools don't have a full-time principal right now, and how many teachers throughout the entire system are we missing? Again, I've just heard some stories with respect to the Ross River School about the principal and teachers — those positions are vacant. That's what I'm asking the minister for: How many vacancies are there in the system, including principals, at schools?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thanks again for the question. We have made progress, for sure, on the recruitment of principals. We had vacancies at F.H. Collins, Kluane, and Old Crow. The principal position at F.H. Collins was filled, and we're very happy with that, and we currently have letters of offer out on Kluane and Old Crow. We anticipate those positions to be filled very soon with that process being at that stage.

In terms of vacancies, current postings — as of November 15 — include 15 teacher postings, with four in Whitehorse and 11 rural. As we fill positions in different places, that is where it is fluctuating a little bit and going up and down, because there are teachers moving around in the system. We have seven EA positions — four in Whitehorse and three rural — and four Yukon First Nation language postings — two Whitehorse, two rural.

We have been working to manage this, and this not something that is unique to the Yukon. This has been a nationwide issue around the recruitment and retention of teachers during a global pandemic. This has been a pressure across the country. I know that my deputy minister, Nicole Morgan, has been working with colleagues from across the country around understanding this place that we find ourselves in. It's very unusual for us to have this many vacancies and to

have difficulty filling teaching positions. Oftentimes, rural teaching positions are a little bit more difficult to fill, but to have these types of vacancies in Whitehorse is quite unusual. We're working, of course, on strategies and working in a whole-government approach to recruitment of staff in different areas, such as in health and education where we have these pressures. There is a lot more to come on this, and I will be happy to bring it forward when we are there — the larger government strategy around recruitment and retention of staff. I have certainly heard the issues that have been raised at the school council level, as I have had discussions throughout the territory, both urban and in the rural communities.

I know that we will have to have different plans in place after November 30. That is something that our department is working on.

Again, several different scenario approaches — and we know that we will have to work in a different way with the rural communities, and we are preparing for that. That is why the Public Service Commission is working with Government of Yukon staff now to get the attestations in place so that we can have a better idea — and then breaking that information out to the school situation so we will have a better idea of what to expect. If we are seeing that we're not seeing attestations from rural community schools, then we will be indicating that there may be some pressure there. If we're not getting them before November 30, that will be how we plan.

I think that I have touched on all of the points that you have raised in that question, and I will continue to build on that if we need to keep on this particular topic.

Mr. Kent: I was jotting some stuff down as the minister was speaking, and I think she mentioned that there are 15 teacher vacancies — four in Whitehorse and 11 in rural Yukon, if I caught that correctly — but she also mentioned some of the paraprofessional support positions such as educational assistants.

I don't need her to repeat that because I can check the Blues, but I'm wondering if she is able to provide us with a breakdown of which communities these vacancies are in or which schools these vacancies are in — not necessarily the Whitehorse ones. I'm more concerned about the rural ones because, as the minister said, it's often more difficult to find teachers on call or people to fill those positions — obviously, with the numbers that we see here. If the minister is able to provide us with a breakdown by school or community, that would be helpful.

I did want to just quickly touch on the teacher-on-call issues. The minister mentioned that she has been attending a number of school council meetings, and I think that's great. It is important to get out and listen to the concerns of the school community first-hand. The Leader of the Official Opposition — the Member for Copperbelt North — and I attended the October council meeting for Selkirk Street school. There was a document presented there that raised concerns, not only for the individuals in attendance, but also for us, as MLAs.

What was presented by the school council was a snapshot of August and September and the number of teachers who were absent and then the number of replacements that they were able

to get. When we looked through the seven or so actual school days in August — so, on August 23, there were seven teachers absent from the school, and they were able to get six replacements; on August 24, it was 10 and six; on August 25, it was six absent and five replacements; on August 26, there were eight teachers absent, but they were only able to get three replacements; on August 27, there were seven absent and only three replacements; on August 30, there were seven absences and four replacements; and then on August 31, there were nine absent and five replacements. I won't go through the entire month of September, but this pattern continues. There were only two days when all the positions that were absent got filled. On September 13, there were five regular teachers absent and they were able to cover off with subs; and again, on September 21, there were five absent and they were able to cover off all five with subs. There were a couple of days here when there were seven missing staff, essentially. On September 10, 11 teachers were absent, but they could only get four replacements, so there were seven positions that weren't covered that day. Then, on September 17, it was 12 and five — so, another seven. Those were the two peak numbers throughout this reporting period.

I am curious if the minister can tell us what — I guess my question as the critic, as an MLA, and as a parent — not for a student in this school, but a student in another Whitehorse-area school — would be: What does the department do, or what provisions are in place for those positions that cannot be covered? Again, there were only two days in this 26-day reporting period when the number of absent teachers was fully covered by substitutes. So, I am curious what happens to those classes that aren't covered during those days.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I'll start with — you had asked first around the breakdown of the vacancies in communities, by rural communities — there are the 25 postings — so this is both teaching and the other — all three of the categories: teachers, EAs, and language teachers. Right now, we have 10 vacancies in Whitehorse that are in the postings: three in Old Crow, one in Pelly, one in Carcross, two in Mayo, three in Ross River, two in Dawson, two in Carmacks, and one in Teslin. That's the breakdown there. We know it's very, very challenging for schools.

I haven't had a chance to meet with the Selkirk school council yet. I think we may have that booked now for an upcoming meeting. I do want to note that I know that the situation is improving at many of the schools, in terms of the use of teachers on call, but outside of teachers on call, schools do have a couple of other options that help them to manage, should they have vacancies or what you have described with this particular school, many vacancies over a number of days and a few days without those challenges, but they include temporarily adjusting staff teaching assignments and adjustments to student learning groups.

I talked about this a bit, but in terms of our management of COVID-19 situations and pressures in school, we collect information from schools each morning and have that touchpoint meeting to look at where help is needed, make changes, and identify the challenges on an every-morning basis.

Then we work with that school to ensure that they have the supports and resources that they need. This has included deploying central staff when needed. This has happened on two occasions, one with the Elijah Smith school and one other time with the Whitehorse Elementary School. They were for one day each in each of those incidents.

In terms of teachers on call, again, we are working with them to identify what some of the reluctance has been around when they are being called out and identifying why we are not getting the responses. So, again, this has improved substantially around some of the administrative and technical glitches, but we have also identified a couple of areas of concern with the teachers on call. We are now providing training on the operational plans that are in place in the schools that they would be deployed to and information on COVID-19 in schools and how that is managed. So, those are two things that are happening now. We're working to mitigate the issues as they come up. It's a constant focus of the department to ensure that schools have the supports that they need and that, when we need to deploy, we can deploy other folks to assist where needed. As we move into post-November 30, this will be as well a very big part of the planning for the day-to-day operations of the schools. Thankfully, we have very skilled folks and great relationships with each school to ensure that they are communicating. It is a big part of my outreach to each and every school council to build that relationship and open that line of communication with them so that there is comfort when there is a need to reach out directly and to not wait until things are unmanageable.

Mr. Kent: Those numbers that I gave the minister — that snapshot from Selkirk Elementary School mentioning where on only two of the 26 instructional days in August and September did they get all of their teacher absences covered by teachers on call — the minister did mention that those stats are getting better. One of the things — I believe it was the superintendent who mentioned it — at the Selkirk meeting was that there was going to be some sort of new principal reporting requirements, whether it was just something they could do on their smartphone or at their desk on what I believe to be exactly this — how many teachers were absent that day and how many teachers were covered. Perhaps the minister can shed a little bit of light on that, if that technology has been implemented. Then, since she mentioned that the situation was getting better, does she have some statistics that she can share with us — maybe not specific to Selkirk or any individual school but all — on how many days there was not 100-percent coverage or whatever stats the minister has?

Then, I have just one other quick question with respect to staff deployment from the Department of Education. We have talked about that this Sitting. I'm curious how many certified teachers are available from the Department of Education to go out. The minister did mention that there has been staff deployed on two occasions — once, I think she said, to Elijah Smith and the second time to Whitehorse Elementary School — but is any of this staff deployment from the main department able to assist people in rural Yukon who are having challenges?

Hon. Ms. McLean: In terms of the electronic reporting tool that was discussed — which the member has raised — around a new tool to assist principals in helping us to get the information in a timely manner, it has been in place for one month now. I can return with a report on some statistics around the information that is being gathered from that and from other sources.

Just following up from the previous question, in terms of — the Department of Education has, I think, 12 certified teaching staff within central. Again, yes, we have deployed in Whitehorse — a little bit more difficult to deploy to rural communities, but we are prepared to work toward that, if we need that.

I just have another piece of information that has come to me here, as we were doing this debate around Selkirk. As an example, today, in the check-in, I think that they had two vacancies, and it was offered to them to deploy central, if needed. As an example, today they said, "No, we have the coverage that we need."

In terms of rural communities, some of our other options are to deploy teachers on call. We are prepared to do that; we have done that. Generally, if it is a more rural community, they are deployed for a week at a time, and we are covering travel and expenses around that. Again, we continue to work with our school communities, and we are keeping our hand on the pulse of what is happening and where the pressures are, and we are putting in place contingency plans, as they are needed, which we will also do post-November 30, when there may be other pressures in schools.

Mr. Kent: I forgot to ask a question of the minister the last time with respect to the postings in our schools. She went through a list of the communities, and I thank her for that. She mentioned there are 25. Could she just confirm that there are no postings for either school in Watson Lake — Johnson Elementary or the high school there? That would be great. As I said, she went through them, and I think I caught them all. I just wanted her to confirm that Watson Lake was at full capacity for teachers and doesn't have any current vacancies down there.

I appreciate the responses around the deployment of staff from the Department of Education. I will look forward to getting some of the data from the principal reporting tool that the minister mentioned.

I apologize to the minister, but I just want to jump back quickly to the vaccine mandate piece and when we start to get a sense regarding teachers and other educators who will be placed on leave without pay on December 1. As I mentioned, we have been hearing from a number of employees across the Yukon government with their concerns on this. I have been forwarding them to the minister, if we receive permission to do so from the individuals.

Obviously, this is a very difficult time of year for something like this to happen — when you are placed on leave without pay. I'm just curious — would it be the Department of Education, or would this be done through the Public Service Commission or somewhere else, where there would be additional mental health supports for those employees who require it as we move into the holiday season and they find

themselves without a paycheque because they have chosen not to get vaccinated?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I'll go to the first part of the question around the vacancies in rural communities. The communities that currently do not have any vacancies are Faro, Kluane Lake, Beaver Creek, Haines Junction, and Watson Lake.

In terms of mental health, yes, of course, we know that this is going to cause stress and further pressure on folks who choose not to take this step, but, again, the health, safety, and well-being of all staff and students is always our first priority, which is why we have taken this decision to mandate vaccination — and, of course, always wanting to support employee well-being. It is a critical part of our work toward creating and engaging an inclusive workplace, but I know that this is going to cause a lot of stress and it is certainly something that we have talked about as a Cabinet.

I can point to a few things before I get to the crux of what will be available, but this is, again, the third year that schools are impacted by COVID-19, and now we have taken this decision to move toward mandatory vaccination. Our school staff have already been experiencing pandemic fatigue, including increased anxiety and stress in schools. We talked a lot about this in the session around different behaviours and issues that are happening in various schools in the Yukon. The *Learning during COVID-19 survey* conducted at the end of the 2020-21 school year highlighted that staff respondents noted negative impacts on mental health and wellness. We offer all employees and their families a range of confidential, expert health and well-being services through the employee and family assistance program and through their extended health benefits as employees of the Yukon government. This will remain something that they will have access to, as long as they are within the employment of Government of Yukon. The employee and family assistance program provides counselling and critical incident services as well as nutritional, financial, and well-being services to get support to deal with life-challenging situations, and I would include this in all of these categories.

When school staff are dealing with critical events, we work oftentimes with LifeSpeak to help deploy counselling resources for support and debriefing for staff. So, again, these are services under the extended health care benefits that employees will have access to, as long as they remain as Government of Yukon employees.

I will come back with a bit more information around the time frame for employees who go off work as of November 30 and then those who may go off work as of January 30, because there may be some different scenarios that play out here, but if they are continuing to be on extended health care benefits, they will have access to these programs.

Mr. Kent: So, will the teachers placed on leave without pay still be entitled to the extended health care benefit program that the minister talked about?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, for the period that they are entitled to those benefits. Again, there may be some different

scenarios, and we'll come back with more specific dates if that is the wish of the member opposite.

Mr. Kent: As I mentioned, we are all, I'm sure, getting calls from constituents who will be affected by this, and the time of year — obviously, the Christmas season is a difficult time for some individuals and some families, in spite of what might be happening to some of them here who may be placed on leave without pay. The minister did mention that mental health supports will be available for these employees, but is there any talk about supplementing the mental health assets — or the individuals who offer those services — during this time because, not only is it Christmas, which, as I have mentioned, is a difficult time for many people who are challenged with mental health issues, but it will be compounded by the fact that some, including single mothers whom I've heard from and families, will be under this additional stress of not having a paycheque at the Christmas period.

I mentioned earlier on to the minister that we have heard from one rural school that is anticipating that as many as six individuals from that school will be affected and will be placed on leave without pay on December 1. I'm curious what plans the minister has in place — or in cooperation with the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission — and what they are both anticipating as far as mental health needs and staff needs in not only the Whitehorse area but also in our rural communities.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I know that the pandemic has been difficult for everyone — some more so than others. I have already talked a little bit about the surveys that we have done — the learning through COVID surveys — and ensuring that we are checking in with all of our students, our staff, and our partners and continuing to learn about what is happening for folks. As we navigate through COVID-19, what we know is that mental health has been a huge issue, not only for students and families, but also for our staff.

Our primary focus, and what we are committed to, is ensuring that students are successful at school and that the health and safety of students, families, and staff is number one. It has to be number one. So, that is why we have taken the decision that we have around mandatory vaccination. I know that this is going to cause stress for those who choose not to be vaccinated, and if there are no medical or religious reasons for not getting vaccinated, then it becomes a personal choice. It is a personal choice, of course.

Is that going to cause some hardship for folks? Yes, I think it will. Folks can choose to be vaccinated before November 30, and we talked a little bit about that today — around doing the attestation, using the online tool that is now available and has been live since Monday.

In terms of the information that the member opposite is looking for — in terms of additional supports — I have given the information that I have today around the benefits that will continue to apply to those employees, should they choose to leave their position and go on leave without pay.

I would ask, of course, for the member bring some of these further questions to the Minister responsible for the Public

Service Commission when the minister is here in the House in Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Kent: Respectfully, that won't be until the spring that the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission will appear in Committee, so the timing is difficult, but we will reach out to the minister by letter or written question or some other means to try to get an answer for those constituents as soon as possible, who will be facing some difficult times here as the holiday season approaches.

I just have one question on the attestation piece. The minister mentioned that 50 percent of government employees had filled out that attestation. I am just curious when the window for them to provide that closes. Is it right up until November 30, or is there a date ahead of time, so that individual departments can start to plan for vacancies throughout their system?

Hon. Ms. McLean: My apology about the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission. I will seek the answers and bring them back to the House through the Public Service Commission and the minister responsible in a timely manner.

In terms of the other aspect of the question around the attestation, it will close on November 30, so folks have an opportunity to do the attestation up until November 30. That's when it will close, and we will then have the information that we need to proceed forward.

Mr. Kent: November 30 — to me, that seems fairly late to be able to turn around and deploy staff where needed, not only for Education, of course, but highways and health care. I believe the officials from the Hospital Corporation mentioned earlier this week that 14 individuals — I think that was the number; seven full-time and seven part-time — they anticipated being affected there.

I mean, that is the plan that is in place, so it is a bit difficult to get a sense for how, in such a short time frame, they will be able to turn around, especially with teachers in schools or EAs or other paraprofessionals or custodians, to make sure that those ones are covered off as we move through there to get those final numbers, but again, that is the choice of the government to move on that. So, we will look to see how that plan rolls out, as we get a little bit closer here in the next week and a half to two weeks.

Just to change gears here a little bit now: I wanted to ask about the situation with Hidden Valley Elementary School. I know that there has been a review commissioned by the government with a Vancouver lawyer, Ms. Amanda Rogers, and I can't find the contract for her on the contract registry. At the briefing with officials, we were made aware that perhaps Justice was the lead department on managing that contract, but I can't find anywhere on the contract registry where that contract is.

So, can the minister either direct us to where that contract might be or identify which department is in charge of that contract — the Amanda Rogers contract — for the review of the situation out at Hidden Valley?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I just want to go back to the attestation first and clarify a couple of things in terms of the fact

that it does close on November 30 for folks to register for the first dose, and then we will be working toward the second dose by January 30. We will be receiving reports on a daily — or every second day — basis to see where we are sitting with that. In terms of a rural school that may find themselves with a number of vacancies, we will definitely be working toward ensuring that we have contingency plans. As I have said, those are already underway, in terms of different scenarios that may or may not happen, and we will get more information as we go forward.

In terms of the contract, the contract is held by Justice, and the resources will come from Education, of course. That is a standard practice. I will commit to returning with information around the registry. I don't have that information with me right now.

Mr. Kent: Does the minister have the value of the contract with Ms. Rogers, at this point?

Hon. Ms. McLean: As I have committed to returning with information around the registry of the contract, I will also return with the value of the contract.

Mr. Kent: I wanted to jump over to the situation at Jack Hulland Elementary School. It was my understanding that the acting principal who came from Elijah Smith Elementary School was to be in place until November 12. Has that individual now returned to his duties at Elijah Smith, or is he still at Jack Hulland as of now, given the fact that the original information we had was that he would be there until November 12?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The situation at Jack Hulland — we have had a chance to talk about it quite often during Question Period, so I am happy to be able to speak about it in Committee of the Whole, in terms of where we're at with the school and some of the challenges that they certainly have faced — always focused on the health, safety, and well-being of staff in all schools and ensuring that we have a supportive, psychologically safe and engaging and inclusive workplace; it is very critical for all employees' well-being.

We know that there have been challenges at Jack Hulland school. I have spoken about that and have had the opportunity to sit with at least half of the staff, which happened on October 21. Some of the staff met with me, and I was able to listen and hear them directly and have them express their concerns about what was happening in the school. We further had a written confidential report back to them, outlining what was discussed that day.

The department has replied to those initial written responses and concerns that staff raised at that meeting. I'm going back in a little bit of history, because I think it's important to kind of build to where we are. Last Friday, all staff were offered an opportunity to have a confidential conversation over these next two weeks with a third-party contractor to share further concerns. Also, on November 12, Jack Hulland staff were able to use their professional development day to complete The Working Mind training to support creating and maintaining a psychologically healthy and safe workplace.

Additional opportunities to hear from all staff are planned. The next steps to address the workplace concerns will be confirmed from this information gathering.

Again, the Government of Yukon certainly offers a variety of supports for staff to address workplace challenges, such as resources through health, safety, and well-being to assess, protect, and promote psychological safety in our workplace. Our employee and family assistance program is available for staff on an individual level. Of course, the Respectful Workplace Office is another avenue for staff who are experiencing conflict in the workplace. It's a place where they can receive support and guidance.

Jack Hulland staff — in terms of the date of November 12, that was the period where our principal of the school — the leave went to November 12 and has now been extended. So, the Department of Education has arranged, as you have indicated in your question, for an experienced school administrator, Jeff Cressman, principal of Elijah Smith, to be at Jack Hulland to provide the additional support for the school administration team while the principal is on leave. So, at this point, we are determining the length of that placement for Jeff Cressman.

Mr. Kent: I am sure the minister can appreciate that these decisions for one school obviously affect another school — in this case, the decision to move the principal from Elijah Smith to Jack Hulland has created some concerns that we are starting to hear about now from members of the Elijah Smith school community. I am curious, when the decision was made to reassign — on a temporary and now an extended basis — the principal from Elijah Smith to Jack Hulland, was there discussion held with anybody from the school council, as representatives of the parents in that school community? I am curious if any of those discussions were held with respect to the principal moving from Elijah Smith to Jack Hulland on an interim basis.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I just want to be clear that the principal has not been moved, that Jeff Cressman remains the principal at Elijah Smith school and is the principal right now at Jack Hulland, as well, on a temporary basis. These are the things that take time; this is what takes the time — that we need to work with the school councils and the Yukon Teachers' Association, which we are doing, ensuring that the questions and concerns of both school councils are taken into consideration, as decisions are being made. But, just to be clear, the principal, Jeff Cressman, remains the principal of Elijah Smith.

Mr. Kent: That begs the question — obviously, there have been some challenges that have been raised with respect to Jack Hulland Elementary School, and it is at — looking at the enrolment numbers — it is at or near capacity. Elijah Smith is also a very busy and crowded school with, I am sure, a number of unique needs as well. So, the principal is splitting time — is that what the minister is saying? This principal is splitting time between — he is maintaining his job as principal at Elijah Smith, while also being acting principal at Jack Hulland. Is that the case?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The vice-principal at Elijah Smith is the acting principal right now — comes behind the principal,

who is acting in two capacities right now. This is allowable under the *Education Act* — I'll just be clear about that. If this becomes a longer term situation, where Jeff Cressman remains the principal over two schools, then additional supports for both schools will be put in place. Again, this is allowable under the *Education Act*, and we are still working out some details and working with the school councils and the Yukon Teachers' Association.

Mr. Kent: I just want to be clear on this. So, the substantive position for the individual is as principal of Elijah Smith; there is someone acting in his place there now — I'm assuming, on a full-time basis — and he has relocated to Jack Hulland school as an interim principal, and he is on a full-time basis there, or — and again, I'm also curious with respect to my previous question: What sort of discussions or consultation took place with the Elijah Smith Elementary School community, as represented by the school council on this, because as I mentioned, there are some from that school community who started to reach out to us with concerns about this as well.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Jeff Cressman, right now, is splitting his time between the two schools. At Elijah Smith, we have an acting principal and an acting vice-principal right now, and at Jack Hulland, there are two vice-principals. So, if this scenario continues and becomes longer term throughout the year, then additional supports will be put at both schools.

In terms of the Elijah Smith school council, I have not met with them directly, but I know that department staff have been working closely with them and working on any concerns that they may have — as we are, and have been doing quite regularly, with Jack Hulland school council — looking at the well-being of both schools and ensuring that the proper support is put in place, but again, this is allowable under our *Education Act*, and we are following that, and this scenario is built upon that.

Mr. Kent: Just to be clear, I wasn't inferring that there was anything untoward with respect to the *Education Act*. We are just trying to get a sense for some of the angst and some of the concerns that we are hearing from both school communities with respect to the situation with the senior leadership at both schools.

I will review what the minister said in Hansard, or the Blues, tomorrow, and then if I have any additional questions, I can get back to her with them.

I know that, obviously, this has been the topic of some school council meetings — the concerns around bullying, violence, and vandalism at the school. The minister and her senior staff from the department met with staff — I think it was in late October.

The more recent school council meeting was cancelled, and I thought there was supposed to be a meeting scheduled for this week of the broader school community. I do understand that, on Tuesday, there was a Zoom meeting put together by parents to discuss their concerns, but I am not sure how those concerns will be communicated to the department.

Is the minister aware of the outcome of that meeting or the discussions of that meeting? I know my colleague, the Member

for Porter Creek North, has been a regular attendee at school council meetings and also attended that meeting where concerns were raised the other night. I am just curious how those individuals are to get their concerns to the minister. Should it be through the school council, or can they provide them directly? I am wondering if the minister can share any outcomes of that staff meeting that are not confidential in nature, of course.

Hon. Ms. McLean: There are a couple of different pieces in there, so I will just sort through them. I'll start with the voluntary meeting that was held on October 21 at Jack Hulland school, where the deputy minister and I, the assistant deputy minister of schools, and the superintendent attended. We met with approximately half of the staff. The Organizational Development branch facilitated this meeting, and a confidential report was provided to participants.

The deputy minister provided a follow-up response on November 5 to all school staff, and so there was a confidential report that was produced, and then there was a further follow-up — I think there were eight questions posed to us, and we committed to getting back to them. I can provide the answers to those eight questions. That part was not confidential, but the discussion within the meeting was.

I'll go into a few other things before I get to the parents' meeting. Additional opportunities and next steps were opportunities for one-on-one conversations, to be coordinated through a private contractor, who will deliver a report to central administration. Information collected in individual interviews with the private contractor will be anonymous, and they'll be analyzed so that they are not able to identify who it is, but to identify themes and impacts in the workplace.

Also, in terms of other steps, the Health, Safety and Wellbeing branch continues to support the schools and Student Support Services to develop a plan to address the factors of psychological health and safety, and this will be done through Guarding Minds at Work — a survey and online resource that helps employees assess, protect, and promote psychological health and safety in their workplaces. PSC and Education — human resources — coordinated the provision of the Guarding Minds workshop to the staff on November 12, their PD day. It was well-received, for sure.

Then there is a commitment to continually report back to staff on work and next steps — so, really working hard to bring things to a place — as I have stated lots of times — a workplace that is healthy, safe, and takes into consideration the well-being of all, including our students and the families.

I am aware, of course, of the parents' meetings that have been going on that are being facilitated by a parent. There have been two that I am aware of, which were done in a virtual format. We received today recommendations to the department from parents, and we will be following up on those and continuing to work with our school community and parents to, again, go back to that first statement about ensuring that our schools are healthy, safe, and that the well-being of our children is at the centre.

Chair (Ms. Blake): Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes

Recess

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for those responses before the break. I have some more questions with respect to Jack Hulland, but I think I will take the opportunity to review what was said here today and then come back to the minister before the end of the Sitting, hopefully, if Education gets recalled. I will address those questions at that time.

I do want to jump back to just one question about one topic we were talking about before the break, and that is the contract with Amanda Rogers for the review of what happened at Hidden Valley Elementary School. I think the minister said that the contract is funded by Education but being held by Justice, and that is standard procedure. Can she explain just the standard procedure? Is that something to do with the fact that Ms. Rogers is a legal counsel? Is that why it is at Justice?

Hon. Ms. McLean: In terms of the contract for Amanda Rogers, again, I tabled those terms of reference early in the Sitting. I just want to be clear that this is an independent review. I have already committed to a couple of things around the contract, in terms of the registry of the contract and the value — I will commit to. Any other information related to this question today in Committee of the Whole, I will return.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that from the minister. The question that I had was around the statement that she made, and she can perhaps go back in the Blues, as well, just to take a look at it and get a sense for why it's standard contract for that contract to be held by Justice, even though it's funded by Education — I think that would be helpful for us to know.

I want to move on to a few other topics. The first one may or may not be within the minister's purview here, but the minister will perhaps recall that, from earlier today, in Orders of the Day, I tabled a motion with respect to proof of vaccine for 12-year-olds. What I've been hearing from a number of parents — especially for me, it's parents with young 12-year-olds who are involved in organized sports — is that, with the restrictions and the proof of vaccine requirements, at this point, they're required — to have that proof of vaccine for a 12-year-old is difficult, because they are just becoming eligible for the vaccine.

So, what I had mentioned in my motion is that Transport Canada has a rule in place that if you're 12 years of age plus four months — so, that gives them the time to get their first shot, wait the recommended eight weeks, I believe it is now, get their second shot and then wait a couple more weeks, but meanwhile, they can still participate in the sports or in the other things I identified today from the Yukon government website with respect to dancing, or singing, or other activities. And of

course, what the parents have said to me is this is important for their mental health and important for them to continue, especially, as I have mentioned, the ones I have been dealing with, with respect to organized sports.

Would the minister be able to take that request forward? Would she take it to her Cabinet colleagues, or do I ask these parents, or do we direct it to the chief medical officer of health to take a look at adopting what Transport Canada has for the minimum age, which is 12 years plus four months, instead of the 12-year-old age that the Yukon government has in place right now for proof of vaccine?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I definitely can bring this discussion forward to my Cabinet colleagues, and then further, the ministers responsible for these various areas can bring it to the chief medical officer of health and have the information come back.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that from the minister. I know that it is important to a number of families, so that their children can be able to continue to participate from when they turn 12 to when they are fully vaccinated, which could be as much as two, two and a half, or three months later, if they are able to get an appointment right away.

I wanted to move on to a few other issues. Perhaps the first one that I will touch upon is with respect to the First Nation school board. Obviously, the end of October was the timing for school councils to pass a motion to put the idea of them dissolving and joining a First Nation school board to a referendum of the broader school community. I attended a meeting put on by the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees, where there were presentations by the assistant deputy minister of — it used to be public education, and I think it is schools now, is what you refer to it as, as well as the head — the executive director — of the First Nation Education Directorate and CYFN legal counsel. The three of them presented on the First Nation school board to a number of school councillors, and it was open to the public.

I do have a few questions with respect to that. I do understand that, I think it is, five schools have passed a motion to put it to a referendum. That includes Watson Lake — the school council is joint for the elementary school and the high school there. It is my understanding, as well, that two communities are going the way of a petition.

Can the minister just confirm those numbers for me? Is that where we ended up, after the end of October, with those five school councils going out to a referendum, and is she aware of the two communities that are working on petitions at this point?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question around the First Nation school council. We, of course, always want to ensure that schools meet the needs of Yukon First Nation students and offer all students opportunities to learn about Yukon First Nation history, culture, and languages. We have been working with the Chiefs Committee on Education regarding options for establishing a Yukon First Nation school board under the *Education Act*. We believe that this framework agreement and the establishment of a Yukon First Nation school board is an additional option to enable Yukon First

Nations to meaningfully shape their children's education and improve their educational outcomes.

I will go a little bit into the process and get to the question that is on the floor right now about the petition.

The process to establish a school board can start in two ways: by school council resolution, which we do have five; I confirmed that. That includes the two Watson Lake schools, so really, it is six schools, but the Watson Lake referendum would be in one.

The other way is by petition of 20 percent of the electors in an attendance area, submitted to me before December 13. So, they have until December 13, if a community decides to go by way of petition. Again, as of October 31, five school councils have passed resolutions to trigger a referendum of the electors within their attendance area — parents, guardians, or any current students in the school.

As of November 7 — I don't have the information as of today, but I will check just to make sure — the department is aware of two school communities — Dawson City and Mayo — that have asked for petition packages. Again, they have until December 13 to fulfill that 20 percent. I can't comment, and I don't have information about where that sits with these communities. At this point, they have asked for petition packages. I cannot confirm, either way, where that will end by December 13, but that is the deadline.

Then there is a 90-day window to conduct a referendum. Elections Yukon has agreed to coordinate and hold the referendums.

Just going back to the petition, all of that is being coordinated through the Chief Electoral Officer. The Department of Education has offered to support school communities that have triggered a referendum in whatever community-based way individual communities prefer, including information and resources grounded in the *Education Act*. That's something we are now communicating with all our school communities around this, and have been all the way through, but we are continuing to have that dialogue and share that information.

I think that, up to this point, answers the questions that are posed on the floor today.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for that response.

The two communities are looking to get the signatures of 20 percent of their electors by December 13 via petition, which would then be presented to the minister, and I'm assuming it would trigger a referendum at that point. Is that the process, as I understand it? So, the petition is to trigger a referendum, rather than having the school council pass a motion to trigger the referendum? I will leave it at that, because that is just a quick clarification that I would need to ask a few more questions about.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, the petition avenue is another way, under the *Education Act*, that allows for a petition of 20 percent of the electors, resident in an attendance area, who may request to me to establish a school board in substitution of a school council. As I have indicated, the timeline right now is December 13 to receive any such petition. Right now, we know of two schools that have requested packages. Upon receipt of

that, there would be a process of verification of the validity of that petition, so there would have to be due diligence, which would be undertaken by the Chief Electoral Officer and then the Department of Education. Right now, where we are at is the Department of Education will communicate the clear process for all of the process within the referendum within the next couple of weeks, because we already know that we have five referendums coming.

That is work that will be done by, again, the office of the Chief Electoral Officer. The Chief Electoral Officer will be leading that and will take that — if we receive any petitions, there will be a process of verification beyond that to ensure that it is all up to standard and that the residents and those within that catchment area are verified, and that will be the work of the Chief Electoral Officer to do that work if we receive a petition.

Mr. Kent: I was a bit confused with the process around petitions. I thought that a petition of 20 percent would then lead to a referendum, but it sounds like — if 20 percent of the eligible electors sign that petition, then it is to the minister and the minister will make a determination on whether they go straight to the school board. I just wanted to be clear on that. Am I correct? So, there is no referendum from the petition; the petition is final.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, there will be a referendum if it is verified. The signatories included in that petition package then go through a process of verification, and they will have to meet a certain threshold. The number will be specific to that catchment area for the 20 percent. All of that is then verified by the Chief Electoral Officer, and if that is all verified and up to the standard that has been set, which is very clear, it will then go to a referendum. That is what we have agreed to.

Mr. Kent: Thanks for the clarification. That was an important point that I was looking for clarity on.

So, given that the petition would have to be submitted to the minister by December 13 and then subject to verification by the Chief Electoral Officer, I guess we're a month and a half or maybe a couple of months past where the five school councils that passed their motions would have been to start communicating with their school communities. When would the vote be held if Dawson City and Mayo get the required number of electors to sign the petition? When would the vote be held for them? Is it a different date than it is for the other five school councils, including the joint council in Watson Lake?

Hon. Ms. McLean: There will not be two referendum dates. The goal is the five that we have now, and we carefully worked out the timeline with the Chief Electoral Officer to make sure that this was doable and that we were able to accomplish both.

So, the deadline of December 13 for further petitions to be received gives enough time to verify and then to have the referendum at the same time as those that are by resolution. We are not going to have multiple processes happening; they will all happen at the same time, but they must be held before January 31. That is the deadline, based on the first ones that were received, but according to the act, I have 90 days to hold a referendum. The goal is to not have multiple processes — to

make this as clear to folks as possible so that the information, once a petition — I mean, we may not receive any petitions, or we may receive two. That information is going to be consistent so that the communication used with the first five will then be able to be used with the other two, if that happens. If it doesn't, then we have the five set, and that work is underway now for that planning.

Mr. Kent: So, when we were at that AYSCBC information session, the Chief Electoral Officer was also there. I mean, the elections that I am most familiar with are the territorial elections where there is a voter list established that is reflective of the riding that you are running in, and you get a sense for who is eligible to vote.

But the Chief Electoral Officer said that, for school councils or school catchment areas, there is no voters list established. I guess the question that I had — and I am sure that the minister had, and I'm curious if she has asked the Chief Electoral Officer this — is: Without a voters list, how do you determine what the 20 percent is? If you don't know how many eligible voters are in the catchment area or the school community — how many are eligible to vote — how would you determine what that 20-percent threshold is? I'm curious if the minister has talked to the Chief Electoral Officer about that and, if so, if she could share what the response is to determine that 20 percent without an actual voters list to see what the total number of eligible voters is.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am going to start by talking a little bit about the attendance areas. The attendance areas support the governance and operation of schools and support the school council election process overall. The Government of Yukon has completed a review of Whitehorse school attendance areas, and school councils have been informed of this. Part of that work included looking at all of our attendance areas, so a considerable amount of work has been done on this. It helps to inform this process.

Elections Yukon is using the territorial voters list and worked with the Yukon Bureau of Statistics on methodology. All of my discussions with the Chief Electoral Officer have been in writing, to date, but a tremendous amount of work has gone into this at the department level and with the Chiefs Committee on Education around the process that we are going into. The Chief Electoral Officer is willing and, I think, has offered technical briefings to all parties. I am just confirming that the invitation went out to all of the parties. Again, this is new territory. We do have one school board in the Yukon, which is the francophone school board. Again, this is all found within our *Education Act*. I know that this is new for folks, so I think that this is definitely an opportunity for us to understand what will be happening over the next several months with our Chief Electoral Officer.

We can talk a little bit more about the attendance areas if the member opposite wishes to do that. A lot of work has gone into it in recent times to ensure that we have a clear understanding of what our catchment areas are.

Mr. Kent: Thank you, and I appreciate that from the minister. We will follow up with Chief Electoral Officer and perhaps schedule a briefing so that we can communicate to

those individuals who are asking us about the process and how to determine that 20-percent threshold.

One of the other things that I did want to ask the minister about with respect to this process is how members of each affected school community or attendance area or catchment area can gather information. When we were at that AYSCBC meeting, of course, the representative from the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate mentioned that they would be advocating in support of schools and of people voting in support of joining the First Nation school board, and we certainly recognize that as their role, and it should be their role, but I'm curious what the role is of the Department of Education with respect to giving unbiased or neutral information to voters in these school communities about what this entails, what it means for them as far as representation on the First Nation school board.

Some of the questions we are hearing is whether or not all members are eligible to vote for members of the First Nation school board when those elections are held. So, there is a variety of questions that are coming up and that we're getting from members of the school community, but I'm just curious what role the department will be taking in providing some sort of neutral information and answering questions and if there are — when my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake, was asking the minister about this in Question Period, she asked if there are information sessions planned. I think the minister said that there are, but I'm just curious how many there will be when we are bumping up against the Christmas season and the holiday season, which will be difficult for people to organize meetings.

There are obviously the temporary, or new, restrictions that are in place with respect to meeting size, so there could be virtual information sessions as well. I'm just curious where we send people who have questions and are looking for a neutral response, or a neutral answer, and what the role of the department will be in that.

Hon. Ms. McLean: A big part of this will be communication, going forward. The Department of Education has offered to support school communities and our partners in First Nations who have triggered a referendum in whatever community-based way individual communities prefer, including information sessions and resources grounded in the *Education Act*.

We are working on that now. There will also be Q&As on the Yukon government website under Education that folks can access, if they want to read what the common questions are and get information there. In terms of information sessions, I support neutral facilitation of information sessions that will focus on providing information to the folks within the catchment areas, plus staff and others who may be impacted. The department will also offer Zoom sessions for the public so people can have access in this time of COVID reality that we are in.

Definitely, communication will be key in ensuring that people have the information and that they are properly registered to vote and have all that information, as well, which will be included in the Q&A. It will be included in information

sessions so that it is clear how people can vote and answer any questions they may have about the application of a school board in their catchment area.

Mr. Kent: That seems like a good jumping-off point for me to turn the floor over to my colleague, the Leader of the New Democrats, the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

I thank the minister and the officials for their time here today, and I will cede the floor to my colleague who, I am sure, has a few questions as well.

Ms. White: I also thank my colleague for asking so many questions, which I am sure I will have to read through Hansard after to make sure that I didn't miss anything.

One of the conversations I have been having in the last number of years around education is actually about the Yukon grants and how they work — or don't work, in some cases — for different people. As I have said many times in this House, I am a tradesperson, so it meant I took an intensive program where I was able to access \$500 of my Yukon grant that I only ever accessed one time. I paid almost \$10,000 for my course, and I was very employable at the end. So, I did that before I got elected.

I think that education has changed. Education isn't just about post-secondary, it is not just about university or college, and it's not just about academics. Education looks different, whether it is the environmental monitoring certificate from Yukon University or their Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining. There are lots of different educational paths a person can take that will lead to employment.

One of the challenges that I brought forward in this House previously is that, in order to qualify for the Yukon grant, it is very much directed toward academics, but not all of us are academics. It doesn't mean that where we choose to invest our time and our energy doesn't lead to fulfilling careers and opportunities.

So, I just wanted to give that as the beginning and ask the minister: Where are we at, in looking at Yukon grants and educational funding?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the question. I think that it is definitely an important topic.

Yes, education is changing, and I, too, have a young person — one of my sons has gone through trades training and didn't have all the access that my son who is now training to be a lawyer is getting, in terms of that Yukon grant funding.

If a student or adult learner does not qualify for the Yukon grant, which is connected to the Canada student loans program, which is where that criteria comes from, there is also available to them a student training allowance and Canada student loans and grants. They may be eligible for funding support under post-secondary labour market funding, and that is where most of our flexibility is. So, I think that part of — the bigger part of — the question here is helping folks and directing them into the right program, because there are programs that we have under our labour market transfer agreement that can provide flexibility.

There are three programs, and we have redesigned these programs. I am not sure if the member opposite has had a

chance to look at them, but I actually brought the pamphlets with me today to show, because I had hoped this one would come up, but there are three programs: Building UP, which is focused on support for organizations under workforce; then there is the Staffing UP, which is support for employers; then there is Working UP, which is the support for individuals.

These have been redesigned to be more flexible and to provide the support that individuals need. Really, where we are going with the revisioning and the work that we are doing around making very strategic fundamental changes to our education system — it leads into this, because it is more opportunity for experiential learning, working with our business community, ensuring that great opportunities are provided for young people who want to go into the trades, and that the academic stream doesn't fit for everyone; it really doesn't, and we know that.

I think that some of the reports that we have at hand, like the Child and Youth Advocate's report on attendance, points to that as well. Kids need to be interested in what they are doing, and the way that they are being taught — so, experiential learning and finding their path in our education system and not every student — like I have said, I have two sons who are on very different tracks, but our system needs to support that.

I think some of the changes that we have made with the labour market programs are lining up with that, so we're really happy. Is there more work to be done? Yes, absolutely. We are committed to doing that work to provide as many opportunities as possible for our young people and other adult learners.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. Just to follow up on some of that, what is the value, for example, for a school year that you can access with the Yukon grant, compared to those labour market programs that you referenced? What I am looking for is equity, because, again, programs are different. The program that I took was different from others. Knowing that someone can train to be a pilot, for example, in British Columbia and it can cost \$80,000, but they are guaranteed to have a job at the end and they don't necessarily have access to the same amount of funding. What is the value of the Yukon grant for a school year, and what do those other programs look like that she has mentioned?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I definitely want to provide this information. I don't have all of it in front of me today, but I will come back with a return on this question with more detail. There are a lot of things that factor into this — when you were looking at Yukon grant versus labour market and the Working UP program and other programs that may be available to individuals who are seeking to go through a trade.

There are factors, like whether they are going to Yukon University and would qualify for travel — for instance, if they are in Whitehorse or if they're in a rural community. There are differences in tuition costs, as well, and those pieces factor in.

I will definitely commit to bringing back a return and to detail a little bit more on that, in terms of what are some examples — so, not just providing basic information but giving a few examples, or scenarios, that will look at what the differences are.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that, and I do look forward to that.

One of the reasons to go along this line again is that we acknowledge that education is changing and the face of education is changing. Along with that are families. One of the challenges that was recently brought to my attention had to do with eligibility, and it had to do with family makeup. If you are an 18-year-old and your parent chooses to leave the territory — and you stay because you are working in the territory, you live in the territory, you have your Yukon driver's licence, you have your Yukon health care card — and you apply for an Outside university, and if you get accepted, you apply for the Yukon grant, but then you are denied because your parent lives in a different jurisdiction. The reason that this is an issue is that families look different. Not everybody stays at home when they are 18. We know that, in some cases, many young people leave far before that. So, one of the challenges with the eligibility is based on where your parent lives, because if your parent has left the jurisdiction, but you went to school here, you graduated school here, you continue to live here, it's your primary residence — and so, if the minister can just talk a little bit about eligibility and then if there is an appeal process and what that appeal process looks like.

Hon. Ms. McLean: The Government of Yukon's student financial assistance program supports many students attending post-secondary education institutions in Yukon and beyond. The *Student Financial Assistance Act* and regulations outline the criteria for Yukon grant funding, which is available for students attending eligible, full-time, post-secondary programs. The criteria for post-secondary student eligibility for student financial assistance are established in legislation. The eligibility criteria for the Yukon grant are set out in the *Student Financial Assistance Act* and regulations. Eligible criteria for the student training allowance are set out in the *Occupational Training Act* and regulations.

There is a board that administers this and can take appeals if any issues arise. The director of training programs — there was a time when that position directly advised the board. That is no longer the case. That position is now at arm's length from the board, and the board receives the information independently and is able to then make decisions around appeals that come to it.

Ms. White: Thanks to the minister for that. I was just trying to find the act online, which at times is more challenging than I would like.

Currently, how many apprentices are registered in the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. Of course, I really appreciate the work and what apprentices contribute to our communities — everything within our communities. We just had a chance to do a tribute not long ago and really emphasize how important apprentices are and how broad it is. There are some who look at this in sort of a narrower view. There is a lot of work being done to showcase what can be accomplished through apprenticeship programs.

As of this month, Yukon has 415 registered apprentices, including 111 First Nation people, and there are 44 who identify as women in the apprenticeship programs.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. That is a stellar number.

One of the questions that I have asked over time — and I don't expect the Minister of Education to know, but I guess that I am signalling all ministers that I am curious to have the answer — is: How many apprentices does the Yukon government hire? One of the challenges is that the way in which an apprentice learns is actually on the job, and it is kind of challenging. It is not that you have an extra fully skilled person on the site; you have someone who requires a little extra support and a little extra direction, and it is really valuable.

I have to say that the first time I got the answer — from between 2011 and 2016 — I was shocked. I think the answer was four. But then I was more shocked after 2016 when the answer was still four. I say this because the Yukon government has a real responsibility to take part in that, which is training Yukon apprentices to be qualified journeypersons, because without journeypersons, without trades, things kind of fall apart. They really do, for so many reasons. Every day, you go in and out of a room or a car or you turn on a light, and there is always a tradesperson behind that. I think that it is really important. So, I will just put that out there. I would like to know how many apprentices are currently on Yukon government staff because I think that that is a really important number.

I appreciated at the beginning when the minister gave us the number of vacancies, but one school that is near and dear to my heart is, of course, the northernmost school in the territory, and that is up in Old Crow. The reason why I want to bring forward the Old Crow school is — for one thing, if folks haven't had a chance to visit — if you ever get a chance and you are in Old Crow, please go and visit the school. It is beautiful and is an example of a school that was very thoughtfully built. There is lots of light and there is lots of space; there is lots of space to gather inside, and it is really important because, as you can imagine, in the wintertime, Old Crow is cold.

When we talk about vacancies in communities, can the minister let me know how many vacancies there are in the teaching staff in Old Crow right now?

Hon. Ms. McLean: It is a really important question and I know that we only have a few moments left in the day, but I am very well aware of the issues around vacancies in Old Crow. One of the things about Old Crow, though, is that currently there are 31 students in kindergarten to grade 12. This is lower than what was projected. I think that we had projected that there would be 50 students enrolled, and we presently have 31.

We initially allocated for eight teaching positions for the school year. Again, we currently have 31 students in attendance. Currently, we are recruiting for two teaching positions for the grades 10 to 12 math and science teacher and the principal who is also a learning assistant teacher. We do have a letter of offer out for that position right now. I know that we are running short on time, so I apologize for not being able to go a little bit further on this. I'm sure that we will have more

time during Committee of the Whole to have more discussion, but I would be happy to bring back a bit more information and do a legislative return just because of the time of day.

Madam Chair, given the time, I move that you report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mountainview that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

May the House have a report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of Whole.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to

Speaker: This House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. Monday.

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled November 18, 2021:

35-1-30

Yukon Housing Corporation Annual Report — For the year ended March 31, 2021 (Pillai)

The following document was filed November 18, 2021:

35-1-27

Better Buildings Program, letter re (dated October 18, 2021) from Chris Rider, Executive Director, CPAWS Yukon, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (Mostyn)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 35

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, November 22, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier Government House Leader* Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
Hon. Nils Clarke	Riverdale North	Minister of Highways and Public Works; Environment
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Government House Leader* Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Minister of Economic Development; Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Jeanie McLean	Mountainview	Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

Currie Dixon	Leader of the Official Opposition Copperbelt North	Scott Kent	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Yvonne Clarke	Porter Creek Centre	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Emily Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Annie Blake	Vuntut Gwitchin

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

*Government House Leader: Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee to November 4, 2021; Hon. John Streicker from November 5, 2021

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon**

Monday, November 22, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.
We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. The following motions have not been placed on the Notice Paper as they are out of order: Motion No. 232 and Motion No. 233, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake.

In addition, the following motion has been removed from the Order Paper as it is outdated: Motion No. 131, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will proceed at this time with the Order Paper.

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like to ask my colleagues in the Assembly today to welcome four individuals who are with us today for our tribute to the Yukon Prize for Visual Arts. With us today is Joseph Tisiga, as well as Marie Pier, Julie Jai, and David Trick.

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of National Housing Day

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to our partners in housing in honour of National Housing Day. It is a day to recognize the important work done by housing partners to improve access to housing for everyone in Canada.

Historically, today is a day for Canadians to remember that the Federation of Canadian Municipalities identified homelessness as a crisis in this country and called on the federal government to develop a national housing strategy.

In 2017, Canada's first national housing strategy was launched. This year, this 10-year, over \$70-billion national plan aims to drive the success of Canada's housing sector by providing more Canadians with the opportunity to have affordable homes. A significant amount of work is already underway to improve housing in all parts of the country, including here in the Yukon, and there is still much more that has to be done.

As such, we are thankful for the continued partnerships across all levels of government. Our federal partners, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and our Yukon municipal and First Nation governments are all working

together to find housing solutions based on the identified community needs across the territory.

Building on Yukon's housing action plan, we are working to support the development and maintenance of a robust housing continuum here in the Yukon that captures all types of housing, from housing with services to community housing to private market rental housing to home ownership.

The COVID-19 pandemic has served as a reminder of the importance of access to safe and affordable housing. We are extremely thankful for all of the organizations, businesses, and individuals in our communities who are working hard to ensure that everyone has a roof over their heads.

Non-profit staff and housing navigators work tirelessly to help our most vulnerable citizens gain and maintain housing. Today, we honour their work.

I would also like to recognize the dedication of our partners who make a significant contribution to the housing sector. The Safe at Home Society, the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än' Council, Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in men's shelter, Challenge Disability Resource Group, and Blood Ties Four Directions, just to name a few.

The development of affordable, sustainable, and inclusive housing options that support a better quality of life for all Yukoners is a priority. Partnerships are key to success.

Thank you.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize November 22 as National Housing Day and November 22 to 26 as National Housing Week in Canada.

National Housing Day highlights the important work being done across the country by housing partners to improve access to housing. There is work being done, but the reality is that housing shortages, rental costs, and the housing process are outpacing that work, and Canadians are feeling it across the country.

The need for housing continues to be at the top of mind for Canadians, especially Yukoners as we face a severe shortage of housing and ever-increasing prices in the territory.

The urgency that we are feeling here in the Yukon to address the housing shortage is not unlike that being experienced across the country. But for us, this is our home. This is where our friends and family, fellow community members, and our children have to fight to afford to live. Every Yukoner or Yukon family is facing their own individual housing concerns. They face concerns about how to pay the rent, concerns about whether they will ever be able to own their own home, concerns about finding a home to buy or rent because neither is easy to find lately.

There is a bigger housing picture that needs to be addressed, and it is going to take action. I would like to recognize those First Nations and community organizations for doing their part to address the challenges that our territory is facing. We are seeing a number of creative solutions to make land and housing available for Yukoners, including those from

Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Da Daghay Develop Corporation, Challenge Disability Resource Group, KBC Developments, Vimy Heritage Housing Society, and others. Yukoners need work to happen on that bigger picture as soon as possible to ensure stable housing, land options, and affordability.

In closing, I encourage all Yukoners to examine how they can help to address the housing issues facing our territory so that we can find solutions together.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to acknowledge National Housing Day.

We all know that the housing crisis is as bad as it has ever been in the Yukon. With last weekend's cold snap, everyone is keenly aware of how much each one of us needs a warm, secure place to call home, yet so many Yukoners don't have that. On a single night in April this year, at least 151 people were homeless and over 20 of them were children.

Yukoners everywhere have been working to find our way out of this housing crisis, and I want to thank them for their amazing work. NGOs, First Nation development corporations, and others have poured so much effort and so many hours into making sure that Yukoners can access affordable housing. They are leading the way toward a new way of thinking about housing, not as a commodity, but as a human right, because if we believe in looking after each other, if we believe in taking care of each other, then we need to make affordable housing a reality for everyone.

I would like to end by quoting a tweet from Naheed Dosani, a palliative care physician and activist. This morning, he wrote — and I quote: “I don't know who needs to hear this but housing is healthcare. Housing is dignity. Housing is mental health. Housing is good economic policy.

“And on this #NationalHousingDay and every day ... let's never forget that access to safe affordable housing is a human right.”

Applause

In recognition of Yukon Prize for Visual Arts

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the Yukon Prize for Visual Arts. As Yukoners, we know how incredibly rich in artistic talent and creative energy our territory is. At any time of the year, our arts venues and creative spaces teem with a variety of exhibitions, performances, and programming. The abundance and diversity of artistic experiences available in the Yukon is truly extraordinary. This isn't just in a subjective sense of homegrown pride; there is statistical data to prove it.

The Yukon has the highest per capita number of visual artists in all of Canada. Moved by the artistic creation and talent here in the territory, Julie Jai and David Trick sought to raise its stature throughout Canada and beyond. They envisioned a means to celebrate the skill and unique perspectives of Yukon artists and provide opportunities to enhance artists' creative ability and further their careers. They also wanted to stimulate wider public interest and appreciation of the already thriving arts community in the territory. From this vision came the

Yukon Prize for Visual Arts. Working together with the Yukon Arts Foundation and the Yukon Arts Centre, this biannual award will help to shine a spotlight on Yukon's visual artists. This inaugural rendition of the Yukon prize received submissions from over 100 artists from a diverse array of artistic disciplines.

From these, a jury of esteemed Canadian curators chose six finalists: Ken Anderson; Amy Ball; Krystle Silverfox; Sho Sho Esquiro; Joseph Tisiga; and Veronica Verkley. A selection of their works has been exhibited at the Yukon Arts Centre over the last couple of months. This past Saturday, the winner of the inaugural Yukon Prize for Visual Arts was announced — Kaska Dena artist Joseph Tisiga. A multidisciplinary mix of the dreamlike and the profane, Joseph's explorations of contemporary First Nation identity are incredible prescient in this cultural moment.

Join me in congratulating Joseph Tisiga and each of the incredible artists selected as finalists. Through their work, these artists process a complex and intensely personal range of feelings and experiences, honour traditions, and indulge imagination.

We thank you for sharing your gifts, and I would like to acknowledge the founders, partners, organizers, and volunteers. Julie Jai and David Trick, thank you for your vision, passion, and dedication to the development and broader exposure of Yukon's immense pool of artistic talent. We look forward to the creativity and partnerships that lay ahead.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition in recognition of the Yukon Prize for Visual Arts. The Yukon Prize for Visual Arts recognizes excellence in visual artists. Co-founders are Julie Jai and Dr. David Trick, a couple who live both in Whitehorse and Toronto and have a vast appreciation for the differences of each place. One of the many things that has impressed them about the Yukon is the quality and diversity of the visual arts. Unfortunately, not many Canadians know anything about Yukon artists or Yukon art, and this important part of Canada's cultural narrative is being overlooked.

This was how it all started. The Yukon Prize for Visual Arts brings artists into the national dialogue and allows them to gain the recognition that they deserve.

I have had the pleasure of knowing Julie Jai and Dr. David Trick as friends for years. I know how much they both appreciate and support visual arts in the Yukon, so it gives me particular pleasure today to introduce them and to pay tribute to the work that they have done in co-founding the Yukon prize. Julie first came to the Yukon 25 years ago to provide legal support to the Yukon's negotiating team and has been involved in the successful land claim negotiations. Seeing self-government become a reality has been a highlight of Julie's career. David is a successful consultant specializing in post-secondary education and has had a distinguished career in the Ontario government as well as in the university sector.

I join in congratulating Joseph Tisiga, who is the 2021 winner of the \$20,000 Yukon Prize for Visual Arts. I also

congratulate the other five finalists: Ken Anderson, Amy Ball, Sho Sho Esquiro, Krystle Silverfox, and Veronica Verkley, who each receive a prize of \$2,000.

The Yukon prize featured three internationally respected arts professionals as jurors for this competition and who came to Whitehorse this past weekend to see the art in person: Ryan Doherty, chief curator of the Contemporary Calgary gallery; Candice Hopkins, an independent curator, writer, and researcher who is a citizen of Carcross/Tagish First Nation and lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Gaëtane Verna, the director of The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery in Toronto.

The Yukon prize not only promotes Yukon art and Yukon artists nationally and internationally, but also allows for opportunities for Yukon artists to show their work in southern Canada.

So, thank you to Julie and David, and congratulations to all finalists and especially to our 2021 Yukon prize winner, Joseph Tisiga.

Applause

Ms. White: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate the amazing accomplishments of Joseph Tisiga.

So, Joseph and I first met years ago when we worked together at the Backerei on Main Street. I was baking and he was washing dishes. There were times when I would look over and he would be looking far into space. It was here that I got my first glimpse into his imagination. I remember when he started to open up and share what was in his mind. First it was with small sketches, and then it was with big ideas. So, I was blown away when I first saw his Indian Brand Corporation pieces — his ability to present concepts that are so hard to wrap your mind around, laid out with beautiful watercolour images that challenge you as a viewer.

So, I was a fan of Joseph before this show, but that was the show where I became a fan of his art. If one were to visit my office, they would notice a collage on the wall and, to be honest, it would be hard not to notice because it is a big piece. This collage just happens to be one of the very first collages that he made, so I feel so incredibly lucky to have it hanging on my wall.

Joseph has worked hard to develop a name for himself throughout the art world, and he has been able to do that without ever straying away from his beliefs. He is no stranger to awards and accolades, but I imagine that being recognized on home turf felt pretty good. On Saturday, during the first-ever gala for the Yukon Prize for Visual Arts, Joseph was awarded the top prize by a panel of internationally known judges.

This amazing prize would not be possible without the generous support of fellow Yukoners. As we heard, both Julie Jai and David Trick have been committed to the Yukon art scene. According to Julie, it was one small contribution that they could make to a community that has given them so much. This prize, Mr. Speaker, is not just a win for Joseph or the five other finalists, but for arts in the Yukon. There were 107 Yukoners who applied for the first-ever Yukon prize. That's

107 Yukoners ready to show their art on a national or international scale.

So, today I recognize and thank everyone who has been involved to ensure that the art scene we enjoy in the Yukon is thriving and more alive than ever.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling the letter that I provided to the Association of Yukon Communities yesterday.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I have for tabling a legislative return from debate in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 202, Vote 18.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Dixon: I rise to give notice of the following motion: THAT the Government does not have the confidence of this House and the people of the Yukon.

Ms. Blake: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to establish a publicly funded community clinic staffed by primary care providers, including family physicians and nurse practitioners, who can offer a range of health and social supports.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

COVID-19 vaccinations for youth

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Last Friday, Health Canada announced the approval of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for children aged five to 11. Throughout this pandemic, we have seen the impacts of COVID-19 on youth in the Yukon and across the country. School disruptions, social isolation, and reduced access to academic and extracurricular activities have put strains on the mental and physical well-being of children and their families across the territory.

In the Yukon alone, currently 30 percent of our cases are happening among the unimmunized and the previously not eligible, under-12-years-of-age group. That is why I know that we are all happy to see Health Canada approve this vaccine for Yukon youth.

While COVID-19 infection in children is often milder than adults, some kids infected with the virus can get severe lung infections, become very sick, and require hospitalization. Immunization will help to protect them from contracting the virus and severe symptoms and sickness if they do. In clinical

trials, the vaccine prevented children ages five to 11 from becoming sick with COVID-19 and from severe illness with 90.7-percent efficacy.

Children between the ages of five to 11 who choose to be vaccinated will receive the Pfizer pediatric COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccine is administered as a two-dose primary series recommended by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization to be given eight weeks apart. It will be given by an injection into the arm muscle at a lower dose of 10 micrograms for children between ages five and 11. Those aged 12 and over receive a larger dose of 30 micrograms. Our team at Health and Social Services has done extensive training and planning in anticipation of vaccine approval for children. They are fully ready to receive these vaccines and open bookings for youth once the vaccines arrive in the territory.

Thank you to all of the immunizers across the Yukon who have been working on the front lines ensuring that our communities are as protected as possible from COVID-19. Appointment dates and times will be available online at www.yukon.ca/thisisourshot. Clinic information will be posted as soon as it is scheduled. You can also call the COVID-19 info line for information on clinic dates and times at 1-877-374-0425.

Across the Yukon, we have made tremendous progress, and I ask every Yukoner to continue to do their part in getting this pandemic under control.

We know that vaccines are our most valuable tool in stopping the spread of COVID-19. Let's continue to follow the public health measures that we have put in place, as well as treat each other kindly as we shift into this new normal. Collectively, we can ensure that the coming months lead us to a brighter future.

Mr. Cathers: I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Official Opposition. We're pleased to hear of the approval of this vaccine last week by Health Canada, as well as to hear that COVID-19 vaccines will be on the way for children aged five to 11. We were glad to read the news that the first shipment of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for children touched down at a Canadian airport on Sunday afternoon.

The five-to-11 age group represents a vulnerable population and is a significant part of the current outbreak in the Yukon. There have been many exposure notices for schools, daycares, and day homes.

Can the minister tell us when the children's vaccine will arrive in the Yukon? The government has indicated that they are ready to go to immunize children between five and 11 years old, but we haven't heard dates yet.

Can the minister indicate how long it will take after arrival for the shots to be administered? How will the vaccine be administered? Will it be available in the same locations as adult vaccination clinics, at schools, or somewhere else?

Ontario announced that bookings for children aged five to 11 would be available tomorrow with first shots being administered on Thursday. British Columbia has opened up registrations, and the *Vancouver Sun* reports that one-fifth of

five- to 11-year-olds in the province are already registered. Alberta is also expecting to start giving shots this week.

So, parents in the Yukon want to know when and where the shot will be made available, when they will be able to make appointments for their children, and when those first appointments will be available.

There is also a question surrounding those who are about to turn five in the coming weeks and months. Can the minister clarify when exactly a child will be eligible for the vaccine? Will it be when they turn five years old, or is it based on year of birth?

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, we are glad that a children's vaccine has arrived in Canada, and we encourage parents to immunize their children aged five and up against COVID-19 and, if they haven't already, to get vaccinated themselves. As we've noted before, we believe that vaccination is the best way out of this pandemic.

I also want to, in closing, thank all who have been involved in Yukon's immunization efforts for their ongoing work.

Ms. Blake: I'm sure that, for so many parents in the Yukon, it's a great relief to hear that their young children are finally able to be vaccinated. For the entirety of this pandemic, parents and children have had their lives flipped. The daily routine of school and work was completely different. The risks of going to school were at an all-time high.

Lately, school-age children are seeing the spread of COVID much more up close than the rest of us. Teachers, educational assistants, school administration, and staff have been working extra hard to protect their students. I am sure that, with the news of this vaccine, all are breathing a little easier, so I am celebrating, like so many parents of children five and up, the chance to get the vaccine. This will absolutely help to manage the current wave of COVID.

What is this government doing to sit down with and encourage parents who are vaccine hesitant for their young children to get the vaccine for their kids?

On another note, children who are under five and too young to go to school are not eligible for the vaccine yet. It is our job to protect our youngest Yukoners. Younger children who go to daycare programs and preschool are often too young to fully follow the "safe six". Without access to the vaccine, it is our responsibility to keep them safe.

On behalf of the Yukon NDP, I am once again urging that this government does the right thing for this vulnerable group. We encourage this government to extend the vaccine mandate to early learning professionals. If this government truly believes in protecting the vulnerable, including young children, they will do the right thing.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: By working on the guidance of our chief medical officers of health and their teams, our efforts continue to focus on minimizing COVID-19 serious illness and overall deaths while preserving our health care system's capacity. To help us achieve this, we continue to rely on scientific evidence and expert advice on the use of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines authorized for use in Canada.

The vaccine has been approved by Health Canada for kids, and it is also recommended by Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunization, also known as NACI. This is an exciting development, and we are adding one more tool to our COVID-19 toolbox.

The benefits of vaccination are clear. Combined with other public health measures, high vaccine rates have allowed us to make significant headway in protecting our population from the severe outcomes of COVID-19. This vaccination will provide added protection for school-age children. We know that children can transmit COVID-19 to others if they are infected, even if they have no symptoms. Vaccination will help our children not spread COVID-19 and safely participate in the activities that matter most to their development.

Though children were under-represented in COVID-19 cases through the first three waves in Canada, this fourth wave and the Yukon's second wave is having a greater impact on those under 12 years of age. This is because this group has not yet been able to be vaccinated and community transmission has continued.

As of mid-November in Canada, children five to 11 years of age have had the highest rate of COVID-19 cases across all age groups, although hospitalization rates have remained low. As members of this House have likely heard, and heard from the member opposite today, the pediatric vaccine arrived in Canada yesterday. If the delivery to respective territories and provinces goes as planned, we will be scheduling vaccine clinics for Yukon children aged five to 11 in early December.

I would like to thank the NACI and Health Canada, Canada's chief medical officers of health, and especially our Yukon medical officers of health for providing recommendations based on the current evidence to inform provincial and territorial public health decisions on how COVID-19 pediatric vaccines are best used.

I would also like to take a moment to thank our front-line vaccine and testing teams here in the Yukon. They will again be responsible for rolling out this system of vaccines for our most vulnerable children and again dealing with families on the front lines and trying to make Yukoners safe.

I ask all Yukoners to continue to do their part in stopping the spread of COVID-19. This means following public health advice as well as seeking information from health authorities to inform their personal decisions.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak about this important initiative today.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Physician recruitment and retention

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals, propped up by their NDP partners, have completely ignored the growing doctor shortage in the Yukon. We raised this issue with the Deputy Premier this summer and she wrote back in August to tell us that everything was under control and that the current wait-list for a family doctor was approximately 2,000 individuals. That in and of itself is a complete failure by the

government, but unfortunately for Yukoners, the Deputy Premier, instead of addressing this growing health care crisis, ignored the issue and it has gotten even worse. As of last week, the wait-list has grown by another 500 people.

So, with the Deputy Premier so badly managing this growing crisis, can she tell us why Yukoners should have confidence in her to address the doctor shortage?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am again pleased to rise in the Legislative Assembly and speak to Yukoners about this important issue.

The Yukon Medical Association has been working with our government over the last number of years. This is a national shortage. Unfortunately, we are seeing the effects of COVID-19 and the concerns with respect to health care shortages across the country. I think it's important to focus on physicians and the shortage thereof, but I think it is also important to note the important role that physicians have played in the COVID-19 pandemic across the country and thank them for their front-line work and for the opportunities that they have presented to Yukoners, presenting them with acute health care, not only in their offices but through the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the emergency department there. It is also important to recognize the critical role played by nurses and nurse practitioners on the front lines during this COVID-19 pandemic.

Again, I don't think anyone needs reminding, but a world pandemic is certainly not anything that our health professions saw coming or our governments or our communities. As a result, we are all working hard to make sure that everyone is safe.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, the unfortunate reality for the minister is that their inaction on this file started well before COVID-19. The facts do not paint a pretty picture for the Deputy Premier, the Liberals, and their NDP partners. In fact, instead of addressing this growing health care crisis and doctor shortage, their actions have directly contributed to making it worse. The Liberals got rid of the doctor recruitment program. The Liberals got rid of the doctor recruitment website, and the Liberals have made cuts to the bursary program for new physicians.

Now we have 2,500 people waiting for a family doctor. That's 500 more than three months ago. The Deputy Premier, the Liberals, and their NDP partners should all be deeply concerned about that.

Will the Deputy Premier admit that her inaction has directly contributed to this crisis and do the right thing, step aside, and let someone take over the file who will actually work toward addressing it?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Unfortunately, if Yukoners continue to be informed by the opposition, it is with inaccurate information. The Yukon Department of Health and Social Services is working very closely with national partners, the Canadian Medical Association. I had a conversation recently with Dr. Katharine Smart, the president of the Canadian Medical Association and our very own northern pediatrician. I have spoken recently to the president of the Yukon Medical

Association, and this is a primary issue for both of those conversations.

I can also indicate that some of the inaccurate information involves facts brought forward by the opposition. We have doubled the bursary program since the last number of years to help with medical professionals and our recruitment and retention of those individuals who are being educated in medical professions. I can indicate that we have not cancelled the recruitment position. We are working with the Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Medical Association to determine if that is the right mechanism for us to address this very important issue on behalf of Yukoners.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, we have heard about the minister's phone calls, but what we haven't heard are any actions that she has actually taken. According to the minister's own numbers, one-fifth of Yukoners are without a family doctor. More and more families are having to go to the emergency room for their basic health care needs. This is a recipe for disaster, as it could quickly overwhelm our hospital resources, yet the Deputy Premier is sitting idly by and not treating this issue with the urgency that it requires.

One NDP MLA even said this about the Deputy Premier — and I quote: "It is not safe for her to be in Cabinet." The Legislature has lost confidence in the Deputy Premier and Yukoners are losing confidence in this government's ability to manage important files.

Will the Liberals respect the expressed will of the Legislature, remove the Deputy Premier from Cabinet, and put in a Health minister who will actually address the growing doctor shortage?

Hon. Mr. Silver: In short, absolutely not. Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the members opposite, I have seen this minister work extremely hard night and day, not only through the pandemic response but also making sure that we can move forward on *Putting People First*. A herculean effort has been put forth by the minister. I would add, as well, as far as other actions under her advice as well, bringing back into conversations at the Council of the Federation — conversations about uniting certification for doctors right across Canada — it was a conversation that we were starting before the pandemic.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Silver: There was some work — as the members opposite try to talk off-mic and not listen to the answer, you wonder why they say that they don't hear any answers. We are getting that back on track — those conversations about certification. Nova Scotia and Newfoundland had some work to do to see what we could do based upon some of their initiatives about five years ago. But whether it is working internationally, nationally with our partners, or locally, this minister is doing the herculean effort. I don't know what I would do without this minister, to tell you the honest truth, Mr. Speaker —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Order, please. The member has the floor.

Hon. Mr. Silver: — because her integrity is impeccable and her work ethic is without question.

Question re: Midwifery legislation

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, there is a growing list of how the Liberal government, propped up by their NDP partners, are failing Yukoners' health care needs. According to the government's own numbers, over one-fifth of Yukoners don't have a family doctor, which the Minister of Health and Social Services bizarrely told us equals two percent of Yukoners.

They are also failing women who want access to midwifery services. Women who wanted access to midwifery services this year were left without as, for the first time in decades, the Yukon doesn't have a single practising midwife.

Earlier this year, the Liberals banned unregulated midwifery and promised to hire two midwives this fall. Instead, the Minister of Health and Social Services failed again.

What is the government's excuse this time for failing to deliver on midwifery timelines that they set for themselves yet again?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, again, just because the members opposite are spinning a particular set of facts doesn't mean that those facts are accurate for Yukoners. Our government remains committed to moving forward with the integration of funded and regulated midwifery services into Yukon's health care system, something that the former government never even considered, never mind took steps to do.

This work includes recruitment and is taking more time than we had anticipated to recruit the first two midwives, which we're looking forward to having employed by the Yukon government in early 2022 so that we can launch midwifery services.

While this has been longer than first anticipated, it is a system rollout that has been approved and worked with by the midwifery program that has been set up in Yukon Health and Social Services and additional advice from experts in the midwifery community to determine that this was the appropriate time for the rollout to happen. We had anticipated having midwives in place by the end of this month, and a couple more months will be required for the recruitment. I look forward to that opportunity for Yukoners.

Mr. Cathers: Well, Mr. Speaker, this minister has a pattern recently of trying to dismiss the facts as fake news, but the facts are the facts.

Early in the Liberal government's time in office, they made a promise in their throne speech to deliver publicly funded and regulated midwifery by 2018; 2018 was three years ago.

As the *Yukon News* noted a few days ago, the government ran on a commitment in 2016 and included it in their throne speech. In the recent election, midwifery regulations were listed as an accomplishment of the Liberal government. They have regulations but, for the first time in decades, the Yukon doesn't have a single practising midwife.

The Liberals, propped up by their NDP partners, have banned unregulated midwifery and failed to hire a single midwife.

We hear now that it might be months longer until they get that done. They chose to create a structure that doesn't allow midwives to operate in private practice anymore.

Will the minister agree to speed up the hiring of midwives and change the regulations to allow midwives to offer publicly funded service in private practice?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I suppose that it is one way of putting it. The member opposite says that we have banned unregulated midwifery. The truth is that we have regulated midwifery. That is the requirement for midwives to practise here in the territory. It is what we have been asked to do. It is what we are doing. We are funding and regulating midwifery services here in the territory.

There is a great deal of work underway right now, not only by our internal implementation team, but also with the support of a number of physicians, nurses, midwives, First Nation representatives, and individuals with lived experience. We are working closely with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to ensure that, whether registered midwives are providing services in a home or in the hospital, they are able to work to their full scope of practice. We are looking forward to this option being available for Yukon families here in the territory, something that the opposition never even considered, never mind managed to get done.

Mr. Cathers: Well, the minister can congratulate herself on regulating midwifery out of existence.

In the spring, we told the Liberals that their government's approach to midwifery would leave a gap in service that was unnecessary and problematic. They refused to listen.

The Yukon's last formally practising midwife told the *Yukon News* that the government is — and I quote: "... not listening to them. They kept doing things differently." She added, "Midwifery is regulated and funded and integrated in every other province and territory except P.E.I. You don't have to reinvent the wheel."

The article also noted that the current approach will disincentivize midwives working in the territory, as conditions and pay are subpar. Yukon's midwives are on the move to other jurisdictions. Access to care and choices for maternal care for Yukon women have been reduced under the Liberals, and their decision to ban unregulated midwifery while failing to hire midwives is leaving expectant mothers at risk.

Will the minister agree to speed up the hiring of midwives and change the regulations to allow midwives to offer publicly funded service in private practice?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, some of the words that I heard from the member opposite I heard from the NDP and myself for five years as we tried our best to push the Yukon Party to regulate midwifery, and they did nothing. They did absolutely nothing in that capacity.

We also hear them this time in the Legislative Assembly talking about expanding some of our extended care facilities in rural Yukon where we knew that the 300-bed facility that they were going to build without operation and maintenance planning did not consider rural communities when they were the ministers and ministers of health. We also know that they built an emergency shelter without any plans as well.

Mr. Speaker, we have regulated midwifery. We have done the hard work through Community Services. We have done the hard work through Health and Social Services. The tender went out. We unfortunately didn't get anyone on that tender. The good news is that it's back out and there has been an increase in the category there as well, so we will hopefully see some folks applying for this.

But the main point here, Mr. Speaker, is that the work has been done. A lot of heavy lifting has been done, which we cannot say about the Yukon Party when it comes to midwifery.

Question re: Opioid crisis

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, the opioid crisis is not just a Whitehorse problem. It is claiming lives in rural communities too. Many NGOs and First Nation governments have adopted harm reduction measures in their communities because they want to do everything they can to protect Yukoners. Last week in this House, the Yukon NDP tabled a petition on behalf of community members in Mayo, urging this government to declare a local state of emergency to combat substance use in their community.

What action is government taking to address the opioid crisis in rural Yukon communities?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to speak to this issue today. Again, I have spoken recently to the press to answer their questions with respect to the communities and the issues that are being brought forward by those communities here in the territory. Some of their questions were regarding the petition, and I look forward to being able to provide this Legislative Assembly with a response to that petition.

Prior to that petition being brought — it was actually brought to you, Mr. Speaker. I know that you and I spoke about it, and we presented it to the New Democratic Party and asked them to present it here in the Legislative Assembly because it is not something that could be done through the process with you, as Speaker. I know that one of your communities has sought your guidance and leadership with respect to this matter. I know that we have spoken to them. I have spoken to the mayor and reached out to the chief, and it became an issue recently at the Yukon Forum. It is critical that we address the opioid issue, but it is critical that we do so with community cooperation. I look forward to continuing my response.

Ms. White: Several ministers recently spoke at length during debate in this House about the importance of a safe supply of opioids for Yukoners who use drugs. We all agree that safe supply is an important life-saving measure.

Mr. Speaker, since we're all in agreement on the importance of safe supply, what is this government doing to make a safe supply of opioids available in communities outside of Whitehorse?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It is —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order, please.

Please don't bring the Speaker into the debate.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think that it's incredibly important that Yukoners understand our work with respect to the ability to provide a safe supply of opioids or opioid-like drugs to Yukoners. Like the rest of Canada, the Yukon is currently experiencing an opioid epidemic, and we are expanding access to a medically prescribed safe supply of opioids to help address the opioid crisis in the Yukon Territory.

We have taken significant concrete steps to do that. I'm happy to advise Yukoners of some of the details. We are currently providing continued medical education for physician prescribers who work in the opioid treatment services program to expand their familiarization and comfort with prescribing a safe supply of opioids. This will have effect across the territory; it's not simply a Whitehorse situation. I think that it's important for Yukoners to know and for folks to understand that a medically prescribed safe supply of opioids is the method here in Canada at the moment to provide these kinds of drugs to individuals who are trying to deal with their opioid addiction.

Ms. White: The petition out of Mayo called the opioid epidemic a "crisis", and they asked the government to declare a state of emergency. This government has declared several emergencies recently for COVID-19 and for this summer's flooding in the Southern Lakes, so we know that they aren't shy about using these measures.

We are seeing more and more members of our community claimed by opioid overdoses, and the opioid crisis is claiming too many lives, people who are loved — our children, our parents, our friends, cousins, and neighbours — all lost too soon. This is an emergency that requires action.

Will the government declare a state of emergency and deploy all of the resources necessary to support rural communities battling the opioid crisis?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think, in fairness, that's the question — or one of the questions — that is asked about in the petition that is currently now before the Legislative Assembly. As a result, I think that it is important to properly consider that and to consider all of the questions brought forward by those petitioners and to respond in due time.

I must note that, to further expand the scope of safe supply, which is the core and the crux of the question being asked here today, we are also working with an addictions medical specialist in British Columbia on developing clinical training and prescribing guidelines for physicians in the Yukon. With the ongoing additional clinical training, support, and consultation, I am pleased to share that clients of the opioid treatment services may now access a safe supply through this program at the Referred Care Clinic on a case-by-case basis and that more medical practitioners across the territory are being encouraged to have this training and develop the skill set to help Yukoners.

Question re: Health care services

Ms. Blake: There are thousands of Yukoners who do not have a primary health care provider. With another wave of COVID, access to primary care is more important than ever. Weeks ago, the minister was asked directly if she would open

up a public walk-in clinic. She said no. Then last week, she said that a walk-in clinic is not off the table. The minister is going back and forth. She won't hire a recruitment officer. She won't let nurse practitioners work in the ER. She won't even make up her mind about funding a public walk-in clinic.

Can the minister tell us why she keeps refusing to do more so that Yukoners have access to primary care?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think, again, unfortunately, in an attempt to throw shadow or shade — I'm not sure of the concept or the purpose of these kinds of questions, but they don't serve Yukoners well.

The truth of the matter is that many professionals and individuals in this territory are working very hard to address a national — and perhaps an international — shortage of medical practitioners. At this time, we need to be showing great appreciation for those front-line workers, doctors, nurse practitioners, and nurses who have helped us through this pandemic, will be the ones responsible for continuing to help us through this pandemic, and will also be the guidance and the experts whom we look to in order to determine how to best deal with the shortage of medical professionals. That is a national and international problem. Here in the territory, our front-line workers are working extremely hard to provide Yukoners with the service that they need.

Interruption

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order, please. We welcome the public to the gallery, but you are here to observe, not participate. Please do not clap or otherwise participate in the proceedings.

Thank you.

Ms. Blake: Everyone agrees that something needs to change. No one should have to wait for hours in an ER with other sick patients just for a prescription, but thousands of Yukoners are. The solution to this crisis has already been laid out for the minister. The *Putting People First* report is clear. Yukoners need a publicly funded community clinic right now. This government has the resources, the power, and an instruction manual in their hands. They even accepted the report in its entirety just last year. All that is missing is political will.

When will the minister listen to the experts and open a public walk-in clinic?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I thank the member opposite for the reference to the *Putting People First* report. One of the members opposite continues to quote this report with respect to the fact that 21 percent of Yukoners do not have a primary care physician. Unfortunately, taken out of context, the first part of that sentence is: "Although there are more family doctors working in Yukon per person than in most jurisdictions..." — and it goes on to talk about the shortage, which we recognize to be an extremely important factor in the care that individuals here in the territory receive.

According to the Canadian Institute of Health Information National Physician Database, in Canada, there was an average

of 173 resident physicians per 100,000 people in fiscal year 2019-20. Comparatively, in the Yukon, there were 221 resident physicians per 100,000 people during that same fiscal year. Does that solve any issues? No, it doesn't, but it puts in context the situation that we are dealing with here and, almost more critically, the pressures that exist across Canada with respect to this.

Thank you — I appreciate the opportunity and I will continue with my answer.

Ms. Blake: Since it was released over a year ago, this government has hardly touched the *Putting People First* commitments. This report was groundbreaking, but we haven't seen a plan or even a timeline for full implementation. Getting a clear answer from this government is like pulling teeth.

Now we find out from the Yukon lobbyist registry that they met with an organization about privatizing health care. The topic of the meeting was — and I quote: “Health privatization and outsourcing”.

Mr. Speaker, Yukoners deserve to know what is going to happen to their health care system. Does the minister have any plans to privatize the Yukon's health care system?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am afraid that I am not aware of the agenda that the member opposite is speaking about, but what I can do is speak about *Putting People First* and the importance of that report to this territory and the comprehensive review that it did of Yukon's health and social services system. It was written following a significant engagement between the independent expert panel and Yukoners, Yukon First Nation governments, stakeholders, and health and social care providers. Our government has committed to the 76 recommendations in the report and has formed an implementation committee to oversee the report and report twice annually on the progress made to implement these recommendations.

We are already working on 30 of the recommendations in this report. I am not sure if there was an allegation from the other side that none of them have been worked on — completely untrue. We will continue to collaborate with our partners and stakeholders and report progress as we move forward.

A new director of transformation, innovation, and *Putting People First* was hired at the department, and their primary role is to continue the work on the implementation of *Putting People First* with our partners. To date, we have implemented 11 of the recommendations, and some of these include affordable child care, transferring the Child Care Services unit, and medical travel enhancements, et cetera.

Question re: Teacher staffing

Mr. Hassard: Liberal mismanagement, propped up by their NDP partners, has worsened the doctor shortage. They have worsened the housing shortage, and it is so bad that they have even decimated the profession of midwives entirely, but I would like to talk about the teacher shortage.

Last week, the Minister of Education revealed that the government is scrambling to find 25 teachers to fill vacancies in our schools. We also took note of the disproportionate

number of vacancies in rural Yukon, which include three in Ross River, three in Old Crow, and one in Teslin.

So, can the minister describe one single action that the Liberals are taking to fill these vacancies and address the shortages of teachers in our schools?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. I will start out by talking about how having effective teachers is one of the most important factors, of course, in a student's success at school, and we work to attract and retain the best educators that we can.

I want to again thank all of our administrators, educators, and staff who are working hard for the benefit of our students and all Yukoners. This is the third year impacted by COVID-19. We know that there are a lot of stresses on our education system as a result of that. One of them is attracting educators to the Yukon.

Normally, we put out an ad for a teacher in the Yukon and we are flooded with applications. That is not the case this year. This is a national issue, Mr. Speaker. All jurisdictions are struggling with the same issues that we are in the Yukon. I want to say that our numbers are slowly improving. As of today, we have 10 teacher postings now. So, we've filled some of those postings. I talked about that in Committee of the Whole and I will continue to build on my answer as we go forward.

Mr. Hassard: I'm happy to hear that the minister realizes that it's an issue, but it's really unfortunate that she can't provide even one action that her Liberal government is taking to deal with it.

A recent article in *The Globe and Mail* about how the Yukon, under the Liberals and supported by their NDP partners, has become the worst jurisdiction in the country when it comes to COVID. It was pointed out that one of the biggest impacts has been on schools and in particular on rural schools. The Yukon Teachers' Association president was quoted as saying: “Schools are already understaffed. We have uncertified substitute teachers in rural schools. We can't afford to lose anyone.”

Last week, the Liberals surprised everyone, including teachers, when they revealed that teachers were eligible for rapid testing. But that's just for Whitehorse teachers, Mr. Speaker. What are the Liberals doing to ensure that teachers in rural Yukon have access to rapid testing?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I want to correct the member opposite in terms of some of the information that he just provided to Yukoners. When we talk about rapid testing in schools, when there is an outbreak — and I was clear about this last week. When there is an outbreak, that is one of the methods that the chief medical officer of health deploys. This is not new, Mr. Speaker. We have been in COVID-19 for some 20 months now. When there is an outbreak in a community, rapid testing is one of the methods that is used by the chief medical officer of health and is supported by the Yukon Communicable Disease professionals. When there is an outbreak in a school, rapid testing is also used.

I want to be clear about that. I think that it is our responsibility, as MLAs and ministers in this House, to give

accurate information. That's kind. Clear is kind, Mr. Speaker, and I do not hear that from the members opposite.

I see members across the way shaking their heads. This is a primary focus of lateral violence. Clear is kind. Look it up.

Mr. Hassard: Today, we have learned that we have a Premier who doesn't know the definition of "integrity", a Minister of Justice who doesn't know the definition of "fact". Now we have a Minister of Education who clearly doesn't know the definition of "clear".

What is clear, Mr. Speaker, is that the Liberals, propped up by their partners, are scrambling, and unfortunately, whether it is about rapid testing, Hidden Valley, or the teacher shortage, the Minister of Education has been unable to answer direct questions this entire Sitting. When the shortage of teachers is this bad, it puts a burden on specialty teachers like EAs and language assistants as they are forced to fill in.

These vacancies, combined with the increased absenteeism due to COVID-19 isolation requirements, have meant that we are increasingly relying on teachers on call. Last week, we pointed out that Yukon teachers on call are among the lowest paid in the country.

Will the government review the rates they pay —

Speaker: Order.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I want to again be clear with Yukoners. What is happening in our Legislative Assembly — the fact is that the Yukon Party continues to spin a narrative here. I don't think that it's acceptable and I don't think that this is what Yukoners elected us to do. I think that Yukoners elected us to provide strong, compassionate leadership. That is what we are doing.

I find it very unacceptable for the members opposite to continue to spin a narrative and to cast this doubt and a shadow over the leadership of our territory.

Mr. Speaker, this has been one of the most challenging times in our lifetime, and it continues to be just that.

Do I value teachers on call and substitutes who step in to relieve teachers who are sick or have to care for children at home? Absolutely — absolutely. They are a critical part of our response to our ongoing issues around COVID-19. We are working with the teachers on call to address health and safety concerns and to identify options to ensure that they are supported. I will continue to do that as a minister.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed. We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. Blake): I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*. Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Chair: Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 202: *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Education — *continued*

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to welcome back our officials who will be here to help us with the Committee of the Whole debate: Deputy Minister Nicole Morgan and Andrea McIntyre, director of finance for the Department of Education. Thank you very much for being here.

I would like to thank, of course, the members opposite for their questions last week. I am wanting to continue on with that discussion. I do have a few interim updates and information to share. If members wish to have me continue on with returning with a legislative return, I am happy to do that, but I will provide you with some information today on some of the questions.

One of the questions last week was the value of Amanda Rogers' contract and also some questions around why it is held with the Department of Justice. The value of Ms. Rogers' contract is not expected to exceed \$50,000; however, it is dependent on the time it will take to conduct a thorough investigation and write a comprehensive report.

I think, as members opposite are aware, I have been very clear that I have asked Ms. Rogers to go where the investigation takes her. So, in light of information that is now becoming available, including the interim findings that were presented at a family meeting by the RCMP, all those factors for sure factor into the review and investigation that Ms. Rogers is conducting.

The Department of Justice is often called upon to hire lawyers and consultants who have special expertise to assist in litigation and other matters. The hiring of these experts often remains confidential. Therefore, the procurement rules that govern Justice hiring of these experts do not require public tender and allow greater flexibility for sole sourcing. This allows Justice to engage specialized experts quickly when a matter is urgent.

The cost of all Justice contracts for outside expertise in relation to departmental matters are always ultimately charged back to the operating department. That is the information regarding the contract for the independent review that I asked to have happen in regard to the Hidden Valley Elementary School matters from 2019, again, asking the reviewer to go where the investigation needs to go.

Regarding the First Nation school board, to date I can confirm that, as of October 31, five school councils — six schools, because Johnson Elementary School and Watson Lake Secondary School are one school council — have passed resolutions to trigger a referendum of the electors within their attendance areas and parents and guardians of any current students in the school.

Further information — I know I did share that last week, as of November 19, the department is aware of four school communities — Robert Service, J.V. Clark, Hidden Valley elementary, and Takhini elementary — where petition packages have been requested.

I'll move into more information — part of the first questions that were asked last week were about the vaccine status before November 30. I have a few more details: As of November 18, 35 percent of Department of Education employees have completed their attestations. The department is closely monitoring whether there may be any potential impacts to operations due to unvaccinated employees. As I stated last week, we are working to look at all of the different scenarios. We are prepared to make operational adjustments as needed to ensure minimal impact to schools.

There was another question — I am just trying to divide it between the two — the opposition and the Third Party. There was a question that came up around children turning 12 and their access to services. I did take this back to my colleagues. We discussed it, and we are moving forward on the Transportation Canada guideline which is 12 years old plus four months to get their vaccination to ensure that they are able to participate and allow for enough time for them to become vaccinated. So, that is the information there.

One of the questions that was posed from the Third Party was around adult — a couple of questions around adult learners. I committed to a written response and more detail to provide amounts and eligibility, but for now, I can bring back this information. Again, we want to provide a more thorough answer back to members in the House regarding examples and just more in-depth information.

Under the Yukon grant, funding support includes \$145 per week to a maximum of 170 weeks, travel of \$1,500 for courses outside of the Yukon, and additional travel for students from communities.

Under student training allowance funding support — this includes \$113 to \$237 per week, depending on individual circumstances. Under the Working Up labour market program, funding is negotiated based on need. Generally, support is available for incremental costs, like course costs, including materials, travel, living supports, disability or accommodation needs.

Again, this is one of our more flexible programs that we have for labour market development. I encourage folks to seek out more information. As I talked about last week, we have redesigned these programs to be accessible to organizations, employers, and individuals seeking workforce development.

Since we didn't really get to any questions around the universal early learning childcare, I just wanted to bring forward some information in this regard. The new Yukon universal early learning childcare funding program reduces parent fees by up to \$700 per child per month for full-time participation in licensed childcare programs and provides a minimum wage of over \$30 an hour to fully qualified educators.

This is a vital program to Yukoners. The Yukon government has made a significant and ongoing financial investment in early learning and childcare and has reached an agreement to access an additional \$54.3 million in federal funding over the next five years to support this investment.

This funding will support start-up costs and help to create new spaces. Since April 1, 2021, three new childcare centres and one family day home have opened, creating more than 100 new spaces for Yukon children. The Early Learning and Child Care unit continues to work with individual communities to ensure current programs meet their unique needs and to support the opening of new centres. I think that this is really important information for Yukoners. The bulk of our supplementary budget is around early learning and early learning and childcare.

I wanted to just bring a bit more information around where we are at in terms of accessibility. While there are enough spaces to meet demand in Whitehorse, some rural communities, of course — particularly Dawson — do not currently have enough spaces to meet demand.

As of September 2021, there are 1,491 children registered in childcare programs among 71 licensed early learning and childcare programs across the Yukon. There are a total of 1,905 licensed childcare spaces. Between April and September 2021, three new childcare centres and one new family day home were licensed and opened in Whitehorse, creating 106 new spaces for Yukon children. Among these new centres are the expansion of a program creating 16 new spaces in early childcare learning and a new childcare centre that opened in September, creating 42 new spaces with eight infant spots. This is the Hummingbirds preschool.

As of August 23, 2021, the Watson Lake childcare centre is licensed for 45 children. It currently has 22 children enrolled and a wait-list of six due to a lack of staff. We are continuing to work with these centres to mitigate the issues that they have. Our units are working really hard with all of our communities.

As of August 23, 2021, in Dawson, the Little Blue Daycare has 20 enrolled children with 30 children on a wait-list. The First Nation childcare centre has 50 children enrolled with 30 on a wait-list. The First Nation is operating below capacity due to a lack of staff. Again, the work and effort that we are taking to ensure that we are supporting educational programs and working toward ensuring that we have many trained childcare workers in the Yukon is essential. We know that this strategy

that we're working toward will have benefits for all Yukon children.

The Little Blue Daycare is working toward the construction a new facility in Dawson that would offer more childcare spaces. The society is working with Education officials to ensure funding for a consultant who will be able to update the feasibility plan for a new centre, look into investment sourcing, make financial projections, and provide capacity assistance. A new private childcare centre is under development, as well, in Dawson.

This centre has recently received funding from the economic development fund for building improvements. The current information that I have now is that we are still without programs in Pelly Crossing, Ross River, and Beaver Creek. A private operator is working to develop and offer a new program in Ross River. The centre is scheduled to open potentially next month.

The Selkirk First Nation is currently constructing a new childcare centre in Pelly Crossing. This is really great news and work that we support. Just last week, on Friday, I was able to have a meeting with Minister Gould, who is now the minister responsible in this area; she takes over from Minister Hussen. We had a great conversation about where we are at with Yukon's early learning and childcare. She very much appreciated Yukon's leadership on this file and the steps and progress that we have made and that we stepped out ahead of even the national program being announced and implemented our program in April rather than waiting, because we know that this is one of the key areas for support to families, particularly during this time of COVID-19. This is essential for women to get back into the workforce and this is certainly one of the key areas around COVID-19 recovery and providing good options for families around affordability and the ever-increasing cost of living in our territory. I know that I have heard for certain that families are very grateful that this program exists and that we stepped out and did the work that was necessary to implement a program.

We are looking forward to sharing our experiences with my colleagues across the country. We anticipate a possible conversation with all ministers responsible for these areas within their jurisdictions throughout Canada and for Yukon to share, on a national stage, our initiatives and how we are moving forward with this childcare and how we will be implementing our program and using the federal funding to enhance opportunities for families in the Yukon.

I will just talk a bit more about the agreement that we signed in the summer. We are working with Canada to build a community-based system that provides Yukon families with access to high-quality, affordable, flexible, and inclusive early learning and childcare. The Government of Yukon has made significant ongoing financial investments in early learning and childcare. We have reached an agreement to access an additional \$54.3 million in federal funding over the next five years to support this investment.

The additional federal funding will help to enhance recruitment, retention, and development of early childcare educators, culturally appropriate learning, early learning and

childcare programs, and inclusive early learning and childcare and to support space creation, including start-up funding wages for early childcare educators. The funding also helps us to support the reduction of parent fees to remain, on average, less than \$10 a day for Yukon universal childcare programs. Yukon and Canada announced, as part of the Canada-wide early learning and childcare agreement, cultural enhancement funding for childcare providers that will enable, over the next two years, licensed programs and early learning educators in Yukon to have access to \$800,000 in funding to develop enhanced, culturally rich early learning programs and environments. I will stop there for now.

Mr. Kent: I too would like to welcome the officials back to the Chamber here today to provide support to the minister. I thank the minister for her responses to questions that we raised last week. The Member for Copperbelt North, the Leader of the Official Opposition, handles the critic duties for early learning and childcare, so I'm sure that he'll have some additional questions for the minister at some point during debate.

I have just a couple of topics from last week that I wanted to revisit, and the first one is the First Nation school board. I'm hoping that the minister can clarify for us the — now, I know the candidacy for the initial board of trustees — my understanding is that the eligible candidates have to be descendants of someone who spoke an indigenous Yukon First Nation language.

I think that can change, going forward, depending on what happens, but I know that there is the ability for that to be changed. I am hoping that the minister can give me clarification on one other point, and that's with respect to the ability to vote for the First Nation school board of trustees. So, we will just use Grey Mountain Primary School for the sake of argument because I know they are going through the referendum. If that gets approved and they decide to join the First Nation school board or have the First Nation school board govern them, will all members of that school community have the ability to vote for the board of trustees, whether they are First Nation or non-First Nation citizens?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I really welcome the opportunity to speak about this particular initiative that is underway. I just want to say that it is very aligned with Yukon's future and that our future really is built through partnerships with First Nations. It is especially true when it comes to education.

Our government is very committed to supporting all Yukon learners. Education is a key area of our reconciliation efforts, and I want to take the opportunity to build on the importance of the First Nation school board. We are working with our partners to improve First Nation education and ensure that First Nation perspectives are reflected in Yukon schools.

I know that members opposite are aware that this is an area within my mandate letter and one that I fully welcome. I have been working, and our department has been working, with the Chiefs Committee on Education and also with the Chief Electoral Officer. This is a very complex matter that will, I think, be better served in a legislative return, and I will bring that back to the members opposite in terms of this specific information that they are looking for today.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that from the minister. Perhaps I will also follow up with the Chief Electoral Officer to get a sense of what the voting eligibility is for the First Nation school board of trustees, but I will welcome a legislative return on the matter.

I had a couple more questions with respect to what is happening at Jack Hulland school. I know that we talked about it in Question Period earlier on in this Sitting. There was a commitment made by the Yukon Liberal Party during the last election to review it.

I will just read directly from the press release dated April 5, 2021, during the election campaign. It said — and I will read the entire paragraph for context here: “We know that current supports for students need to be improved, which is why we have commissioned an independent Review of Inclusive and Special Education. The information from this review will help determine how our education system can better support students with diverse learning needs. It will help determine how to use existing supports and what new programs or services are needed.” This is the part that I wanted to ask the minister about. It says: “In particular, we will look at behavioural support programs, such as the Grove Street program, to ensure it is meeting the intended purpose and consider how to offer students on the autism spectrum the best possible learning environments.”

The part that I would like to focus on is: “... we will look at behavioural support programs, such as the Grove Street program, to ensure it is meeting the intended purpose...” What review is planned for the Grove Street program and when can we expect that review to be completed?

Hon. Ms. McLean: This is absolutely a very, very important topic that we certainly have been working on very intently with all of our partners. It really stems from the 2019 audit and final report — *Review of Inclusive and Special Education in Yukon — Final Report* — that tells us that we have to rethink how we are supporting students and delivering timely, effective supports for their learning needs.

I know that the member is asking specifically about one program — the Grove Street program. There are several other programs that fit in this category. There is one at Vanier, there are two at F.H. Collins, there are two at Porter Creek Secondary School, and then there are the two programs that are at Jack Hulland Elementary School.

I know that the member will recall that I talked last week about inclusive and special education overall and the fact that we did go ahead with our education summit, even despite the current state of emergency and the need then to go into a more virtual format. So, we went ahead with our education summit on November 12, which was very engaging. I know that I talked about this at length last week.

This was such a great conversation and so successful in terms of participation with our educators. We had up in the range of 600 folks participate from all of our schools and our partners. At the summit, we learned about the conditions for success needed in order for us to do this complex work together. We heard about the colonial practices, divisiveness, othering, and of the need to value our diversity and connections to each

other. That was one of the key messages that I know for sure that I went away from that session with — I was very inspired and I know that other folks were. The summit was a critical step in establishing the communities of inquiry or working groups that will be tasked to identify specific actions and our response to the review, which is guided by the First Nations Education Commission and the education partners through the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education, and I think that this is very key.

I want to talk about these communities of inquiry a little bit because this is where it gets to the answer that the member opposite is looking for. They will focus on the following areas: co-constructing definitions of “inclusive and special education”; updating inclusive and special education policies; exploring effective professional development structures; cultivating connections and establishing values and norms to transform the culture of the Department of Education; implementing consistent IEP templates, processes, and structures; creating coordinated and holistic support for students and families; and aligning budgets and funding models. Our intent is to review all of the programs — as I listed them out — from all of the schools. The working groups are getting themselves established. We went through the terms of reference at the education summit, and we have had a really great uptake in folks wanting to populate these working groups. The intent is that each working group will have at least two meetings before the break in December.

So, we want to move forward on all of this work. There is a lot of heavy lifting to be done. We are revising our education system; that is essentially what we’re doing. This work has to be in partnership with all who are involved with education for K to 12 in our territory. I’m very grateful for the partnerships that we have and for those partners — particularly the two that I mentioned with the First Nations Education Commission and the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education. I thank them for all of the work that they have done to work with us to get to this point — very committed to see this through. I believe that the answers really fall within the reviews that we have before us and the steps that we have charted out to take together as partners.

Mr. Kent: I guess, for those parents in that school community who were hoping for some more immediate action with respect to what’s happening at Grove Street, it sounds to me like the review that the minister spoke about may take a while. It could take some months or longer to complete. I’m curious what types of actions the minister is considering in the short term or the more immediate term to address the concerns that parents have with Grove Street school. It sounds like, from the minister’s response, Jack Hulland Elementary School is the only elementary school that hosts a program like this. The other ones that I think the minister mentioned were at the Whitehorse area high schools. Obviously, there are some concerns, and I know that the minister knows that from hearing from parents, teachers, and others in that school community.

Just to get back to my questions, what are the more immediate steps that the minister is considering with respect to the Grove Street program at Jack Hulland Elementary School?

Is moving the program out of Jack Hulland an option that she is considering?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I want to start with some of the statements around what we want our schools to hold up as the primary objective and foundation of our school system. The Department of Education supports healthy, active, safe, and caring learning environments in Yukon schools. The commitment is outlined in our Safe and Caring Schools policy, which applies to students, parents, teachers, and other school staff. This is a sensitive matter and one that I have heard directly about at a number of different meetings. I have heard at the school council, which included not only some administrators, but also, of course, the school council, family members, and staff. Further, I have attended a staff meeting that included about 50 percent of the staff and heard directly the concerns that they have. We have been in receipt of more information from parents, and we talked last week about some of the concerns in the school. I will get to those broader concerns in a moment.

In terms of Grove Street, again, I will just be clear that senior officials of the Schools and Student Services branch are currently determining interim steps for the program while we work to examine all of the shared resource programs. This is underway, and I have already talked about that in terms of how it relates to the whole review of inclusive and special education.

At this moment, we have three children registered in the Grove Street program, all of whom are being supported for their individual program outside of the school. Intake is currently on hold, and there will be more information to come around this.

Again, keeping in mind that core value of what we strive for within all of our schools in the Yukon, we have been working with school administration, school council, staff, and families, and we have heard their concerns around student violence at Jack Hulland school for a number of months. These are serious situations. I have spoken about it in the House to date and with the media.

I want to talk about where we are at today. Information has recently come to light that the use of holds and physical intervention being used to manage student behaviour at Jack Hulland may be in breach of school policies and possibly the *Criminal Code of Canada*. This information has been reported now to the RCMP and Family and Children Services. We understand that an investigation is now underway. To ensure that we provide full and accurate information to support the investigation, the Department of Education is conducting a fact-finding review to look at workplace risk assessments at Jack Hulland, including the Grove Street program, as well as other relevant reports involving the use of holds and isolation rooms over the last five years.

We will continue to work with parents to address their concerns regarding the management of student behaviour, including the recommendations that they have provided for moving forward together.

We are working to confirm who will lead this fact-finding review, and we will share more details as they become available. I want to be clear that the Yukon Teachers' Association has been engaged and that the school council staff

and families are being notified. There is a school council meeting this Wednesday, which I will attend along with senior officials.

As we move forward, we need to support all those who have been willing to have courageous conversations and ask difficult questions around student and staff safety. These are not matters that I take lightly, and we continue to be dedicated to the well-being, safety, and protection of students when they are in our care. We will continue to make this our primary focus.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that information from the minister, and I will look forward to receiving more information as that situation unfolds.

I wanted to jump over now to some questions regarding student transportation. It is always a difficult issue, particularly at the start of each school year as some parents don't have their children registered for the buses and additional routes are planned. I am sure there is some juggling that goes around.

As we are a number of months into the school year, I just wanted to get the minister's comments on a couple of specific issues that have been raised with me. The first one is about students out in Marsh Lake. I think that Judas Creek is the furthest away from Golden Horn school. These are students who attend Golden Horn school. Some of those students are on the bus for 90 minutes each way — so 90 minutes in the morning and 90 minutes after school before they get home. I know that one of the challenges is that the route that comes from Marsh Lake and the south Alaska Highway to go to Golden Horn also loops now into Pineridge and then comes back to the school in the morning. Then, after school, it goes to Pineridge first to drop off those students and then back out to Marsh Lake. I am just wondering if any consideration has been given to potentially adding another route to that so that those students who get on at Judas Creek in the morning aren't on the bus for that length of time in both directions.

Just one other issue that came to me last week from a constituent of mine in the Golden Horn area — their child who is in kindergarten attends Whitehorse Elementary School. By the time they do their bus transfers and the bus drops other students off who are on the route, including, I think, up to Émilie Tremblay and Elijah Smith schools, the student and her classmates are consistently arriving after the initial bell has gone. It is causing quite a bit of anxiety for this particular student and, I'm sure, for some of her classmates. I am curious if any thoughts have been given to adjusting some of these routes now that we're into the school year a little bit further.

Again, the first one was with respect to students coming in on the south Alaska Highway, particularly from Marsh Lake, and the amount of time that they are spending time on the bus both ways, and then the second one is about buses that, due to scheduling and transfers, are arriving at schools after the first bell has gone.

Hon. Ms. McLean: The Department of Education — I know that this is a very key part of a child's day in school and spending the least amount of time in a bus is, of course, preferable. We know that there are challenges for some of the outlying routes, and we have certainly heard some of them. The

transportation committee is looking at sort of the broader picture.

I wanted to just start by talking about where we are at in terms of busing and some of the challenges that we have had this year. Like many other jurisdictions, Yukon is facing a driver shortage, and we are working with our contractor, Standard Bus, to support them in their recruitment efforts. Again, this is an area where we are seeing shortages of bus drivers.

Combined with the pandemic, this is a challenging time. In some cases, it's unfortunate that the busing contractor has had to cancel some routes for the day. I know that this is not exactly what you are asking. You are asking about routes, but these are some of the challenges that have contributed to some of the frustrations and some of the issues that parents have had.

We certainly are encouraging, if there is disruption, making it to those that are not really rural areas — because it is more difficult. We know that, for parents who are traveling in to attend work or school or whatever it is that they're doing, it is much more difficult for them to make a quick pivot back out to — whether it would be Hidden Valley or Golden Horn or Marsh Lake — deal with a bus cancellation or route disruption, so we're really working hard around that. I wanted to start by talking about that.

Standard Bus certainly is dealing with the driver shortage as best they can. They are working with them to develop contingency plans to help ensure that cancellations and disruptions do not affect the same route for multiple days in a row. That is one of the mitigation practices. Folks know that Standard Bus is responsible for notifying schools and families when there are bus route cancellations or issues with those routes.

I know that some of the mitigations that they have — they actually brought in drivers from BC at some different points during the year. I know that this hasn't come up in Question Period. There are a lot of issues on the table, for sure, but this one was one that didn't come up. I wanted to just put that on record in terms of how Standard Bus is working to alleviate some of the pressures.

This is the bus route that the member opposite is asking about — bus route 39, with pickup at Judas Creek, and the first stop moved from 7:14 a.m. to 7:24 a.m. The arrival at Golden Horn is to be around 8:20 a.m. We have looked at this issue — the department has, along with the transportation committee and other folks. Making a change would reduce the overall time from 70 minutes to 56 minutes for the first-stop riders.

It would be a difference of 14 minutes, and the change would result in the route being route A and B — so the B run would go to Pineridge after 8:20 a.m., drop off Golden Horn, and arrive back at school at 8:40 a.m. When we looked at making this change, it would actually cause disruption to more students by making a change to this bus route. Of course, we are trying hard to make sure that children have the best experience they can and that we are providing the necessary tools and means to be at school. So, we did look at making that change, but it would cause a lot more disruption for more students so I think that we would be right back here talking

about more students. We estimate that probably 12 children and families will not be in favour of this split option.

We can return with a little bit more information about this route and put it in a legislative return that describes both scenarios. I know that it is hard to describe it. It would be good to get on the bus and see what it feels like for those students to get that experience, and then you have that first-hand knowledge. That's not something that we have the luxury of doing, so I depend on folks who are looking at these issues very closely. We know that there would be more disruption to more students if we make the change that is being discussed here.

Mr. Kent: I am just hoping that the minister can touch on that second issue that I raised with the young student at Golden Horn who goes to Whitehorse Elementary School on that bus arrives after the morning bell has already gone. I'm just wondering if there are any service standards with respect to that, if the minister could look into that for us.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would very much like the member opposite to provide a little bit more detail to us outside of the Sitting so that we can get more specifics about this student. I would be happy. We want to look into it and give a more thorough answer and see if there is anything that we can do to ensure that this young child is not having the experience in a negative way that has been described here today. We will return with a legislative return, but we also would really welcome that information so that we can follow up directly with the family.

Mr. Kent: I will send the minister a letter. I was just curious if there were service standards around buses arriving after the morning bell had gone and if there could be schedule changes made to accommodate that. Again, I will follow up with the specific situation for the minister so that she and her officials can provide a response to it.

I did want to move on to some questions regarding individualized education plans. On May 31, I submitted Written Question No. 11 to the Minister of Education regarding individualized education plans, or IEPs. It has been on the Order Paper since then — the tail end. I think that might have been the last day of the Spring Sitting and throughout this Fall Sitting so far. It hasn't been responded to, but perhaps what I will do now is just ask these questions of the minister so that I can request that the written question be removed from the Order Paper.

These are questions regarding IEPs. The first one is: How many Yukon students were taken off IEPs as a result of the government's decision to phase them out in 2019 or to adjust the criteria for them? The second one is: When was the minister and Cabinet made aware that students had been taken off of IEPs? The final question was: How many Yukon students have been put back on IEPs since the 2021 confidence and supply agreement between the Yukon Liberal caucus and the Yukon NDP caucus was signed on April 28, 2021? Again, this is Written Question No. 11, which has been on the Order Paper since the end of May.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question on the individual learning plans. I would first like to go back and look at some of the background around this and what occurred in the

fall of 2019 while responding to information requests from the Auditor General of Canada during the most recent audit.

Central administration staff identified considerable variables in the use of IEPs, SLPs, and BSPs. These are the three types of plans that we have within Education. As a result, some presentations to school staff were given in the fall of 2019 to review the requirements of the *Education Act* and to clarify the criteria used for different learning plans to ensure consistency across Yukon schools. This included guidance for working with families to ensure that their child is on a plan that best outlines the supports they need to reach their maximum potential. In some cases, this meant that school staff worked with families to shift a student to an SLP or BSP instead of an IEP.

At the same time, the direction given was that students could not be switched from an IEP without agreement from their parent or guardian. This was not about reducing, I think, learning supports available to students. Rather, it was more about providing the students with the specific plans, tools, and services that they need to be successful in school. No changes were made to the supports that students can receive to ensure that they are successful in school.

Now, working with families more recently, the Schools and Student Services branch worked with each school to contact the parents of students who were transitioned to a student learning plan — that is the SLP — or a behaviour support plan — this is the BSP — in 2019 to give them the opportunity to have their child switched back to an individual learning plan if they wished to do so. What we identified the true number to be — 71 plans were identified at that time as moving from a student learning plan. Originally, there were 62 individual learning plans found to have changed in the student learning plans after the fall of 2019. Nine plans were also identified where the data was not clear about when the plan had changed, so those parents and guardians were contacted as well. Schools were provided with the information for their school, with instructions to contact each family by no later than the end of day, Friday, May 28 — again, this aligns with our agreement with the New Democratic Party under the CASA — to determine whether or not they wished to have their child's learning plan switched back.

So, where we are today is this: As a result of the work that we did in the spring, 39 student learning plans have been identified to be reinstated as individualized education plans for implementation at the start of the 2021-22 school year; 22 families affirmed the desire for their child to remain on a student learning plan; 10 plans were identified as students who have moved out of the territory or graduated.

In the work plan for the review of inclusive and special education, we will work with Yukon First Nations, parents, staff, and stakeholders to create greater clarity around the types of learning plans available to students. I talked about this a bit in terms of the work that we did on November 12 to form the working groups. This is one of the areas that was identified as one of the working groups for the communities of inquiry. Terms of reference have been set with those groups. We're populating them now with individuals who will work on this

particular area within inclusive and special education. We have committed to having at least two meetings in every working group before the December break. Moving forward on this has taken a little bit of time — a few months — to get the work plan settled and to get the education summit to happen and to then now work toward all of these areas within inclusive and special education that need more inquiry and more work with all of our partners.

That is where we are at today. I would be happy to answer any more questions if that wasn't clear.

I do want to note that I did hear a member opposite previously from the Official Opposition talk about a number that was much higher than the 71 — almost double. I want to be clear that, when we went back and looked at all of the plans, we identified 71. That's the number that we have and that we have been working with. I have already given the breakdown of those students.

Mr. Kent: Just for clarification, the number that we spoke of that was twice as high, I believe, as the 71 that the minister mentioned was actually from the Yukon Teachers' Association and First Nation Education Directorate, Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon, and Autism Yukon — the four organizations that got together and sent a joint letter to the Premier and then did some subsequent media afterward. That's where that number came from. It wasn't something that was from us. It was from those organizations that work directly with the schools.

I will get a chance, hopefully, to review the minister's remarks with respect to the IEPs, and then the five additional questions can come back prior to the end of this Sitting or through a letter or into the Spring Sitting.

One of the questions that I do have, though, is with respect to EA or paraprofessional support for students. I am curious if the department or if the minister keeps records of how many requests for EA support are received. Usually they come in the springtime for the following year. How many are approved? Does the minister have numbers from this past spring on how many applications were received and how many were approved for the fall?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I want to start by just — how important again, educational — that we strive to ensure that children receive the educational supports that they need to be successful in their learning needs and where they can reach their maximum potential. I want to go back a little bit on this, because this is a key area around the inclusive and special education, and I know I keep coming back to it, because it is so relevant to all of the discussions that we're having. One of the key areas that we'll be exploring more in-depth is creating coordinated and holistic support for students and families. This is one of the working groups, and this fits within that community of inquiry.

But I want to go back in time a bit to the model that we currently work with, where it came from, and when it came into play. So, back in 2015-16, an educational assistant allocation advisory committee recommended the current needs-based allocation process. Each school assesses its needs and submits a request for educational assistants to the Schools and Student

Service branch. The school support services staff review all of the school's requests and use a needs-based formula to initially allocate educational assistants. Educational assistants are allocated to schools in the spring, and the principal assigns them within the school to best meet student needs.

So, at the beginning of the school year, adjustments are made to the allocations, based on the actual student enrolment and needs at each school. The allocation may be further adjusted during the school year, as needs change.

So, school-based allocations: In terms of that, the base allocation for each school is determined by student enrolment and an index of assessments from Yukon's student assessment matrix, which looks at this. So, initial allocation by enrolment — elementary index allocation — is based on kindergarten assessments, including a test on basic concepts, a test on early-year evaluations, as well as the grade 4 foundational skills assessment and the grade 7 foundational skills assessment. Then there's a secondary index, where allocation is based on an average of the elementary index of the feeder schools.

The next area is intensive-needs allocation to provide shared or intensive support for student needs. In addition to the school-based allocation, each school can request EA support to either be shared by groups of students to be assigned to a specific student base or on their intensive support needs, which may require one-to-one support. The Department of Education assesses each school's request in this category, with consideration of student data and criteria, in order to determine the need for student-specific supports.

Again, the educational assistants are one of several resources that a school has to support student learning. These resources include classroom practices implemented by classroom teachers to provide learning activities that accommodate students with diverse abilities and special education needs; school counsellors; educational assistants and learning assistant teachers; the central Student Support Services unit; the Curriculum and Assessment unit; and the First Nation Initiatives branch. First Nation education support workers and community education liaison consultants are also a part of the scenario, as well as community-based supports, such as those provided by Health and Social Services. EAs are one of these supports that are provided. A needs-based model is used to allocate these positions in as fair a way as we can, in an equitable way across Yukon schools. These allocations vary and are adjusted each year as school and student needs, and school enrolments, change.

This is where we move into the review of inclusive and special education. We will be examining how we allocate EAs and other resources to best support students. This was a very big part of our discussion at the education summit recently. I think that, again, this is an area that requires a lot more discussion, which is why we worked it into one of our communities of inquiry, basing — we know that there has been frustration on basing these types of support allocations as a primary foundational need around just the enrolment. We need to be looking at it differently, and so we are. That is what our commitment is going forward.

You wanted to know the actual requests for EAs, as opposed to the actual number that we have. I would have to come back to you with a legislative return on that to give you those accurate numbers. I have in front of me what the allocation is for 2021, based on today's date — 2021-22 — but I do not have in front of me the actual — I have the comparison from last year, but I don't have the request that has been made from each school. I would have to come back with more information around that.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for that. Yeah, I wasn't sure if she would have those numbers, but I appreciate her commitment to get them back to us.

The minister will probably recall from our PAC hearing this summer on the mental health hubs that I raised a question about the psychoeducational assessments and the wait times. A constituent reached out to me about wait times for their child. Later on, I believe it was sometime in September, on CBC's *Morning Show*, there was another parent who spoke about the wait times being perhaps as long as two to three years.

I am curious what type of action the minister has planned to address those wait times or the length of the wait-list. I understand that it's not a traditional "first come, first served" wait-list. It's prioritized based on needs, but if the minister has an idea that she can share with us on how long the wait-list is for these assessments, how long the time is, and what the plans are to reduce that wait time.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I thank you again for the question. This is definitely an area that was pointed out in our review of inclusive and special education. We agree that there is too much of a delay for assessments of children. This goes back to the individualized education plans. It is really hard to develop an individualized education plan for a student who doesn't have a full or complete assessment. We definitely heard loud and clear that these assessments need to be conducted in a more timely manner, which is why it is embedded in one of the working groups that I have talked about already, in terms of working with our partners, working through our next steps here, and taking recommendations and working through this area. It falls into the implementing consistent IEP templates processes and structure. This is a very big part of the work that we are doing around the implementation of the inclusive and special education review and report that we have in hand and that came out of the 2019 audit — that student assessments need to be conducted in a more timely manner.

We are advancing the recommendation in the final report of this review to develop localized criteria around prioritizing assessments and ensuring that student learning needs are being addressed. If a student needs a formal assessment, school staff may still implement many strategies, supports, and accommodations recommended through the school-based teams and informal assessments to address the learning needs of the students so that they can be successful at school now, and not wait, but the length of time to perform an assessment is dependent, of course, on the complexity of the student's needs, the nature of the assessment needed, and the schedule of the professional administering the assessment.

I want to really thank our partners at this point — in terms of how certain partners like the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate are working with us and have filled a few of the gaps in terms of some of the assessments that are needed immediately and in a more timely manner. Again, this is one of the areas that we are addressing together with our partners in the implementation of inclusive and special education.

When an educator and/or a parent has concerns about a student's learning, the first step is for the school-based team to discuss the student's needs and collaborate on what strategies or intervention should be implemented by the school staff to support the student.

If a referral is received from the school-based team, Student Support Services staff determine the type of assessments needed based on the nature of the need presented by the school-based team and a review of the student's file. So, the Department of Education educational psychologists completed 123 assessments last year. This includes academic assessments to determine student ability in relation to the curriculum in addition to complex, multi-faceted assessments. A school may request specific or further support from Student Support Services through a formal assessment of the student's learning needs.

Again, we know that this is a critical area for us to look at in terms of ensuring that we are getting these assessments done in a more timely manner that will then inform the type of learning plan, if a child needs an individual learning plan.

There are a lot of reasons. Of course, because these school-based teams sometimes determine some of the smallest barriers, you think: Oh, well, you know what? There's an actual issue with just getting the consent from the parent to do it. Sometimes it's as easy as just identifying this, getting the consent, and moving it forward in a more timely manner. I know that this is an area of critical concern for Yukoners, particularly those who are waiting for assessments to happen. Again, these need to be identified to the school-based teams so that we can ensure that they are on our radar.

Mr. Kent: I wanted to touch on some of the French immersion programming now with the minister, the demand for it, and some of the space concerns that we've heard from Selkirk Elementary School. This next series of questions will be with respect to the French immersion program.

I know that the demand is high for kindergarten registrations every year. So, the past number of years, there have been two French immersion kindergarten classes placed into Selkirk alongside the one English-stream class. It is a dual-track school — French immersion and English.

That is something that is extremely important to the school community and the school council that we've talked to. I know that, with the minister's predecessor, they have asked in the past to go back to just one French immersion kindergarten class. When it was started at Selkirk, it was incremental, so the kindergarten class was started and then moved to grades 1, 2, and 3. I think that some of those initial kindergarten kids are due to graduate from the school perhaps as early as this year, if they haven't already done so.

I am just curious what the minister would say to the Selkirk Elementary School Council and the school community about going back to perhaps one kindergarten class there and looking at potentially expanding the program or diluting the program to different spaces like the Whistle Bend elementary school that is under construction and due to be completed here in the next couple of years. Are there any plans so that Selkirk can remain dual-track and not get to the point where it is too overcrowded? Obviously, there are portables going in there now, but I know that this is something that the school community raised quite a bit with the minister's predecessor, and I'm sure they will raise it with her when she gets a chance to visit that school community and that school council meeting. Again, I'm curious what the plans are for French immersion going forward.

The other question that I have is with respect to high school capacity. F.H. Collins, of course, is the French immersion high school. As I said, we have additional kindergarten classes coming up through Selkirk. There are a number of kindergarten classes at Whitehorse Elementary, and then there are some other feeder schools to F.H. Collins, including Golden Horn, which has seen an uptick in enrolment over the past number of years as well. I am just trying to get a sense for high school capacity and what the plans are for when this rush of students hits high school. Do we have enough capacity at F.H. Collins right now?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, it's a very important question. I've had a chance to meet with École Whitehorse Elementary. I haven't had that opportunity to meet with Selkirk Elementary as a school council, but I did meet with École Whitehorse Elementary.

This was specifically a question around — just commitment around having a broader discussion, in terms of longer term vision. Of course, recruitment and retention and high school capacity — and I know that the French — the advisory committee met on November 17, and they discussed the French immersion subcommittee, and they'll be meeting again in January with the school council chairs. I think that this is a great place for this discussion to happen. We know that this is a very — in terms of — I'll break it out into the two — you are talking first about kindergarten and enrolment. We certainly continue to monitor enrolment and work with our school communities and partners to plan for the long-term needs and delivering French second-language programs in Yukon schools.

This early French immersion is a very popular program in Whitehorse, offered at both École Whitehorse Elementary and Selkirk Elementary. We continue to monitor and plan for enrolment for this program and to recruit qualified French language teachers to support all French second-language programs. We know that these are hard-to-fill positions in our Yukon schools. We're really working to ensure that we do not have these vacancies. They are vitally important to the success of the programs.

Just in terms of some numbers for the 2021-22 school year, we have committed 101 spaces to French immersion kindergarten classes. Government of Yukon plans to continue Selkirk Elementary as a dual-track English-French immersion

school, continuing to have these discussions with the committees that are specifically looking at this, and our department officials are part of that discussion. That is a commitment that I made at the École Whitehorse Elementary School Council, and we'll continue to monitor that discussion as it goes forward.

In terms of high school, we know that it is important that we're able to accommodate the needs of our high school students as they move out of elementary into high school. At this point, the high school enrolment is lower, and we are projecting that we can accommodate the need within the current school. Does that mean we do not need to plan? No. We need to plan, and we need to continue to have that discussion with the committee that is looking at this.

Again, I note that they met on November 17. They discussed these areas around long-term vision, recruitment and retention, and F.H. Collins capacity. We anticipate the next meeting to happen in January, and I will be closely monitoring that discussion to ensure that we are effectively supporting this work to happen — which is a commitment I made — to ensure that we are working with all our partners around that longer term vision for this very important and highly popular program in Whitehorse right now.

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Deputy Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Ms. White: I thank my colleague again for the thorough questions that were asked.

I want to ask the minister a question about a response, or a letter, that the department sent out on November 4 to SOVA — so the School of Visual Arts, the governance chair, in Dawson City. It said that: “The Department of Education has supported SOVA since its inception in 2007 through the existing transfer payment agreement with Yukon University as a Strategic Initiative. I want to assure you that SOVA remains a priority and we will be supporting the one time \$36,794.25 bridge funding request.”

It goes on to say: “I have forwarded your submission, which requests additional core funding, to the Joint Agreement Management Committee (JAM). This committee meets monthly and includes officials from both Yukon University and the Department of Education. JAM handles all funding requests for the agreement, including requests for budget increases from any of the Strategic Initiatives.

“I understand the next meeting of the JAM is scheduled for November 18, 2021. The SOVA governance council should

expect a response to your submission and advice on next steps from JAM by Friday, November 26.”

So, my question is if the minister knows what the next steps will be toward SOVA.

They are looking for additional funding to continue to build their organization. My understanding is that they are looking for funding for an additional staff person — so, if the minister wants to talk a little bit about SOVA and SOVA funding.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you very much for the question. I very much support the School of Visual Arts. I really believe in the work that they are doing at a community level. We are committed to, of course, supporting and fostering vibrant arts and culture in Yukon. I spent four years as the minister responsible for culture and heritage in the Yukon and had a lot of chances to interact with SOVA and actually have met with them personally about their needs and the need particularly around some of the bridge funding, but also some of the needs going forward.

The Government of Yukon continues to provide funding to Yukon University to deliver the School of Visual Arts program in Dawson City. The arts program provides formative artists with industry-transferrable skills and foundational art requirements for academic arts programs in partner universities. So, we provide right now \$504,000 annually to fund SOVA programming.

I certainly have heard from them about the pressure that they have and the popularity of the program. I am happy that we were able to provide that bridge funding of \$36,794 to cover the current year shortfalls. We are working with Yukon University and the SOVA governance council to determine how an indigenous arts component can be part of SOVA's programming. I am really excited about that possibility. It's one that is definitely near and dear to a lot of folks in the Yukon.

I want to just pivot a little bit to the Yukon University transition and the work around moving toward this transition that we are currently in. The act provides that the Minister of Education must establish accountability and performance measures for Yukon University in consultation with each Yukon First Nation and the university. This work is underway. The department is now planning an engagement process, which will take some months, but it will also include the work around strategic initiatives and how we fund strategic initiatives. This is certainly one of those areas. I am very committed to continuing to work with SOVA and with Yukon University around the needs for this important community-based program and the pressures that they currently have. I was able to go a few times, but in my capacity now as the Minister of Education — having that lens going through the facility and looking at what their current needs are and how they want to expand and meet the objectives of Yukon —

I am very excited about the discussions that are happening now around the indigenous arts component and other program areas. I certainly know lots of individuals who have gone through SOVA and have gone on to higher learning and have gone all the way to achieving a master's degree in arts and who are a very big part of our vibrant art community.

We just did the tribute today. We have, in our territory, the largest number of artists per capita in the country. We want to support them. I think that Yukon is certainly on the map for providing unique programming that helps to move into higher learning.

Ms. White: Just to confirm then, we will be hearing back on November 26 as was highlighted in the letter.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you very much for the question and the clarifying question as well.

The committee has met and has issued the bridge funding. I will commit that SOVA will be contacted prior to November 26 to discuss the additional request that they have before us and for the university to work toward. I will definitely commit to having that response back to them before November 26.

Ms. White: I am going to veer quite a bit, actually, to a letter that was sent two years ago, just about, November 5, 2019. The reason why it's relevant is it's about the SOGI policy, the sexual orientation and gender identity policy that came into effect in 2012. If you were to go onto Google right now and you were to google "SOGI Yukon", it comes up on the yukon.ca website as a draft from 2012.

I know that, when students of Porter Creek Secondary School Gender and Sexuality Alliance, as we know, were working really hard to bring the perspectives of rainbow students forward, they sent a letter in 2019. It's relevant because there is a *Yukon News* article at the time that actually quotes both the minister opposite and myself talking about it. So, I can quote back myself. I said — and I quote: "What we're finding right now is that the SOGI policy isn't being enacted and that (the discrimination is) systemic ... It's across all Yukon schools."

And then it goes on to say that the Acting Minister of Education — so, that's the current Minister of Education — said that some of these concerns have been captured in a survey intended to better include LGBTQ2S+ people in legislation, policies, and services, among other things. And now I'm going to quote her from the news article; she said — and I quote: "We have taken it as a high, high priority," she told reporters. "Young people in our schools are facing discrimination and LGBTQ2S+ people are facing that across this territory and, really, Canada-wide, so we know this is an area we need to focus on, which is what we've been doing."

The article goes on to say that, when asked by reporters whether the Liberal government would commit to updating the SOGI policy in order to protect queer students, the minister said — and again, I quote: "We will work closely with them. I believe there will be changes. It's a very high priority for our government."

So, the reason why I am bringing forward this news article from November 8, 2019, is that, when I looked for the SOGI policy on the Yukon government's website, it comes up from 2012, and then I'm just going to reference a letter from students.

I am just going to quote from this, and I am happy to send it across to whomever. I am quoting from the middle of it: "Having read through the SOGI Policy, our group has serious

concerns about its implementation in Yukon schools and the degree to which it is being adhered. They are as follows:

"The department maintains that it will not permit or tolerate (zero tolerance) any homophobic behavior or bullying, yet these discriminatory and hateful acts take place every day in our schools. We feel staff and administrators in Yukon schools do not know how to appropriately respond to these incidents nor do they sufficiently know how to provide the necessary support for those who are intended or unintended targets of such behaviors."

So, they asked the question: "How are school administrators ensuring that students and staff practice appropriate behaviour and actions to prevent homophobic discrimination and harassment?"

So, that is my first question: How is the Department of Education supporting school administrators to ensure that students and staff practise appropriate behaviour and actions to prevent homophobic discrimination and harassment?

Hon. Ms. McLean: As the member pointed out, I was acting at the time of those quotes being taken. I stand by them. We have made huge strides, but we still have a long way to go, not only in our territory, but in our country.

I was just looking to the reference within the LGBTQ2S+ action plan that we launched this past summer. The Government of Yukon's *LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion Action Plan* represents a commitment across government to make programs and services more inclusive to LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners. The action plan is divided into nine sections with more than 100 actions: health care; education and youth; community and culture; inclusive governance; public facilities; Yukon government as a workplace; gender data; and tourism and culture. Many of the actions are definitely underway — this being one of them.

Of course, we are continuing always to work closely with LGBTQ2S+ organizations as this plan is implemented to ensure that we're on the right track. We have committed to releasing progress reports as we go forward and to keep an evergreen type of action plan that is able to adapt when needed.

Specifically under education, there are a few. In the way that the action plan is designed — "What will we do..." is the caption on the top, but it goes into some description around Government of Yukon acknowledging that LGBTQ2S+ students and staff face difficulties in the education system that can be a barrier to accessing and providing education.

All youth and staff deserve a safe and supportive school environment. The Department of Education will not permit or tolerate any homophobic or transphobic behaviour or bullying in the schools. That is easier said than done. In terms of where we're at around inclusive education, we know for sure that this is an area within special education — inclusive and special education — that we must address, and it's definitely included in our work in the implementation of inclusive and special education.

When we talk about inclusivity, we talk about it in a number of different ways. What our system has done to date is to put all those who are different somewhere else. They don't

fit. If they don't fit the norm that our society has constructed, then they go somewhere else.

I think that, right now, our move is to move away from that. Again, going back to our action plan that we launched this summer, what will we do? We will implement the sexual orientation and gender identity policies and encourage schools to support gender and sexuality alliances — GSAs — or similar clubs and, in the next year, update the SOGI policy to address such issues as: use of student correct gender pronouns; updating terminology to be trans-inclusive; addressing gender-identity inclusion in sports; clarifying points of contact and responsibility at the department and school levels; and work with the student's family, central administration, school staff, Yukon First Nation partners, and school communities to develop and implement a plan to improve and modernize the department's inclusive education programs. That is the work that is underway under inclusive and special education.

I am really excited about that. I am excited to be the Minister of Education because I know that this is an area that I have wanted to focus on directly. Again, another area — what will we do? We will provide education and training for teachers and school administrators in LGBTQ2S+ cultural competency. That is so key. There are a number of steps that we will do this year that we are in. These are things that we are moving toward.

Again, what will we do? We will improve anti-bullying initiatives in Yukon schools, especially for LGBTQ2S+ youth. Again, how will we do it? There are a number of actions that identify what we will do.

What will we do? We will encourage extracurricular programming that is more inclusive of queer relationships and diverse gender identities — so very concrete actions. We did not construct these in any other way than in an inclusive way — “nothing about us without us” as the foundation and principle behind how we worked to develop this plan. I embrace these areas of action. That is why we developed an action plan like this, so that people can see that these are the things — and keeping it evergreen — what's next?

This is a tremendous amount of work. It's a culture shift — so very committed. Thank you very much for the question. I appreciate that. I am always super excited when portfolios touch, and this is where it touches for me — from Education to Women and Gender Equity.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I guess that one of my concerns is that this policy was drafted in 2012. It has been highlighted by a group of children that it is inadequate. That was highlighted in 2019, keeping in mind, of course, that it was the same group of rad humans who brought forward the need to ban conversion therapy. These young people were activated.

I can say right now, with a fair amount of confidence, that the people who wrote this letter in 2019 — some of them have graduated from high school and moved on. It is still relevant, because I search on the Yukon government website and it comes out from 2012.

Other issues highlighted by students were things like: school-based policies should be posted in a physical location in every school and not just posted on school websites. They have

a long list of things that they believe will make it easier for them, and it's important to recognize that rainbow students exist from early learning straight through. So, making sure that folks have support is critical. One of the things that was also highlighted is that sex education for rainbow students is non-existent. That was in 2019, so I am hopeful that maybe things have changed.

Is there a sex education curriculum now that reflects rainbow students?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I thank the member for the question — a very good question. Again, I refer to our action plan around the work that is underway there, but I think that some definite steps have been made. Yukon's curriculum resources and professional learning for teachers follow the department's sexual orientation and gender identity policy, which promotes appropriate, respectful behaviour and prevents discrimination against LGBTQ2S+ students. A review of the SHARE resources — it is an acronym for the resources that are used — has now been completed and was done by certified sexual health educators — trained through Options for Sexual Health, OPT, in BC — in order to provide feedback to ensure that language used around gender inclusivity is reflective of current best practices and aligned with BC learning standards. The revised SHARE resources are currently in a design stage — more to come on this.

I'm happy to bring back more information as it becomes available. I thank the member very much for the question. Again, there is a huge commitment here in terms of ensuring that we meet the expectations that are outlined in our action plan.

Ms. White: I do thank the minister for that.

Last week, in a conversation with my colleague, the minister made a commitment to actually come back to the House with some information. The question was: Does the minister have the value of the contract with Ms. Rogers at this point? The minister committed to returning with the information. I was wondering if the minister has that information about the cost of the independent investigation being led by Ms. Rogers.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I did, at the top of our discussion today, talk about the value of Amanda Rogers' contract. Right at this point, it is not expected to exceed \$50,000. It is dependent, of course, on the time that it will take to conduct a thorough investigation and write a comprehensive report. So, that is where it stands now.

I did also just talk about the role of the Department of Justice and their role in terms of managing this contract and that the Department of Justice is often called upon to hire lawyers and consultants who have special expertise to assist in litigation and other legal matters, and the hiring of these experts often remains confidential. Therefore, the procurement rules that govern Justice hiring these experts do not require public tender, which allows greater flexibility for sole-sourcing and allows Justice to engage specialized experts quickly when a matter is urgent.

Again, it is very standard that the costs of all Justice contracts for outside expertise in relation to departmental

matters are always ultimately charged back to the operating department.

That's the information that I reported on earlier today and I can provide more information if the member requires it.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for going back so generously to something that was already said today. I do thank the minister for that.

The opposition was able to have a briefing with the acting — I don't know if it is the acting chief medical officer of health, but Dr. Corriveau — last week. We were seeking clarification on vulnerable populations. Recently, the Department of Education sent a letter to early childhood education centres informing them that, although they receive government funding, they do not work with vulnerable populations and thus do not fall under the Government of Yukon's vaccine mandate. So, what I'm seeking right now is clarification if children under six are viewed as "vulnerable" by the government.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to speak about our childcare centres in relation to COVID-19. The health and safety of our children and families is always our first priority. Licensed childcare centres continue to provide valued, high-quality service to our community, especially to essential workers, during this challenging time.

At the onset of my comments today, I spoke about the universal childcare and the work toward ensuring we have even more quality childcare spaces available and where our funding is going. I am really encouraging that to happen throughout the territory. We are working with our most rural communities now to establish centres. The chief medical officer of health has provided clear guidance for Yukon-licensed childcare centres, school-aged programs, and family day homes for COVID-19. This has been in place for some time. The director of the Early Learning and Child Care unit made the guidance compulsory for all of our licensed facilities. This was communicated to licensed operators at the end of August.

COVID-19 — well, maybe I won't even go into that, in terms of the steps that are taken, because I think they are definitely aligned with the Department of Education. Early learning and childcare programs, and family day homes, were notified that the vaccine mandate does not apply to staff of early learning and childcare programs or family day homes, unless they are operating in a Yukon government workplace, such as a school.

While there is no legal requirement, one of the things I want to emphasize is that daycares and family day home staff — we're really encouraging them, as businesses, to choose to develop and implement their own vaccine-related policies. We continue to encourage that.

I will go back to my colleagues who are directly responsible for working in a direct relationship with the chief medical officer of health to bring back that specific information about the vulnerability of those under five.

Ms. White: I do thank the minister for that. I guess it is fortuitous that the acting chief medical officer of health will be appearing as a witness next Monday — that is my impression. But based on that briefing that we had on Friday, there was the assertion that children under five were vulnerable. There was a

bit of confusion even in that briefing as to why childcare centres and others that took care of children were not included in the vaccine mandate.

Again on Thursday of last week, my colleague asked the question: Will the minister include all early-years professionals in the vaccine mandate? The response was — I am quoting from Hansard on Thursday of last week, November 18 — and I quote the minister: "... again, we will continue working to clarify how the mandatory vaccination policy may apply to licensed daycares and other settings, and we will share more information as it's available with operators."

I guess the reason why I am asking that question is because we know that the mandate, as it's set out right now, references November 30. There is all sorts of information that says that if it is an entity — an NGO — that gets money from the government as a transfer, they are included in the mandate. It's important to say right now that I absolutely support universal childcare. I do. I would like to see it extended, broadened, and supported across the board. This isn't about challenging the cost of it. This isn't challenging those things.

I am just looking for clarification from what the minister said last Thursday and what the acting chief medical officer told us on Friday. How was that decision reached? Why is a child who is under five not vulnerable, but a child in kindergarten is vulnerable once they reach kindergarten? I am just trying to get an understanding and clarification.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I thank the member for the comments. Right now, we have clear guidance from the chief medical officer of health, as it applies to Yukon licensed childcare centres. That is what we are following. That is what we have communicated. I stand by the comments that I made last week in the Legislative Assembly — that if further guidance is provided to us from the chief medical officer of health regarding childcare centres, as we have throughout this pandemic, we will take that recommendation and we will make a decision within our government. We have followed the direction for the past 20 months and made those decisions based on the advice given.

As I have stated, this has been clearly communicated — what we have in front of us currently in terms of the guidance. All of the early learning and childcare programs and family day homes were notified on November 10 that the vaccine mandate, at this point, does not apply to staff in early learning and childcare programs. We will continue to follow the guidance given, as we have in this latest version of the recommendations as it applies to schools.

We have adjusted our guidelines for operational plans, including masking for those schools. That was guidance given by the chief medical officer of health. We have also cancelled all activities between schools, and we continue to work on a day-to-day basis with the chief medical officer of health around keeping schools open if they are safe to do so. This is similar to that. If further guidance is given around these centres, we will take that advice and move forward on it.

I am also happy that we have the witnesses coming into the Legislative Assembly next week to discuss and take direct questions from all Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that and I do look forward to that opportunity next week in a more public fashion.

So, there are many different reasons why parents decide to send their children to childcare or keep them home or send them to part-time programs such as, in the City of Whitehorse, I would say Chickadees or Purple Stew. Purple Stew has been running — I would actually hazard a guess that there may be some members in this Assembly now who attended Purple Stew back when they were of that age. But there are some part-time programs that are really valuable. They have been around in the community, not just in Whitehorse, but in communities for, in some cases, decades.

So, while it's great that the government has implemented universal childcare, why are our part-time childcare programs not included in the childcare subsidy? By not being included, parents enrolling their children in these part-time programs end up paying more than parents with children in full-time care. In some cases, it would be more beneficial to register your child for full-time even though they weren't attending full-time childcare.

Can the minister walk us through why part-time childcare programs are not included in the childcare subsidy?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The government provides licensed operators who have opted into the new program with \$700 per month for each child in full-time childcare, which must be fully and immediately applied to reduce the monthly payments made by parents. This is pro-rated for children in part-time childcare, so it does apply to part-time for licensed programs. The new program also includes fee increase limits to ensure that fees charged to parents remain both sustainable and affordable and in line with rates charged by other local providers delivering the same type of childcare.

In terms of the reference that you made, for non-licensed programs, like Chickadees Playschool — it is a non-licensed parent-participation early learning program which has requested funding for operational expenses. Non-licensed programs are not eligible for funding currently under the ELCC funding model.

The unit has engaged with Chickadees Playschool in discussion to determine whether licensing their program is an appropriate approach in order to access funding under this funding model. At this time, the program has determined that they prefer not to pursue the licensing option, so that is their choice. But, as a registered non-profit, there are a variety of other funding streams that Chickadees Playschool may be able to access. Officials have informed the organization about what other funding options may be available to them. Again, this is definitely a requirement in order to maintain the oversight of the programs — and we have an incredible team at the department that is working to ensure that we are aware of all of these issues, for one, and that we are working with them.

So, this is a decision that they have made, but other part-time licensed daycares or afterschool programs — if they are licensed, parents are eligible for pro-rated rates. I would be happy to talk to any parent. Again, within the department, we have a branch ready and willing to have those discussions, led by Betty Burns, director of Early Learning and Child Care. She

has been doing a fantastic job, and I am really happy that she is leading the branch in the way that she is.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that.

Now that early learning has moved from Health and Social Services to the Department of Education, will the department be making sure — or ensuring or allowing — that there is mandatory professional development for early childhood educators as there is for teachers? Professional development is a real asset. It allows school communities to choose what they want to learn and what they want to work on. I know that earlier this year, this was definitely discussed with early childhood educators — that they would like to be able to direct their own professional development. Is that going to be a thing now that early childhood education has gone from Health and Social Services to Education?

Hon. Ms. McLean: It is fantastic that we're talking about early learning and childcare today. We invest in high-quality early learning and childcare in order to provide rich early learning experiences and environments for children. We recognize the importance of qualification and training for the early childhood workforce. This is an area that we are very committed to. We have committed to demonstrate meaningful progress on improving quality by increasing the percentage of early childhood educators providing regulated childcare in the territory who fully meet the Yukon certification requirements.

We are certainly working with post-secondary partners and First Nations to ensure that all educators have access to training programs in order to become fully qualified. Under new agreements signed with Canada, substantial new investments will be directed toward post-secondary institutions to recruit, retain, and train early childhood educators for Yukon's universal childcare system.

Directly to the question, for those who are already working within our childcare centres, we have built into their transfer payment agreements — understanding to work with them and provide opportunity.

I think the big opportunity here is that, under the new agreement signed with Canada, federal funding will be directed toward post-secondary institutions to offer additional courses in order to train more early childcare educators, with the goal of at least 40 additional students enrolled in early childcare education courses by the end of 2022-23.

Discussions with the university are certainly underway around proposed actions. These actions will address the training needs of level 3 in order to bring them toward full qualification. Among the proposed actions are: rural course offerings tailored to individual community needs; flexible practicum offerings to support educators working in the field; a new flexible cohort designed to train level 3 with exemption educators; the Yukon University ELCC learning lab continued funding for the student financial assistance program; and offering First Nation-developed ELCC courses in partnership with the First Nation Education Directorate. A lot of work is underway, and I think that there are a lot of entry points for those who are wanting to seek further certification and to better their education.

We are supporting this. We want to see this happen, and we want to be able to ensure that folks who are working in our early learning and childcare are paid what they deserve. That is a really big part of our commitment to not only providing that financial assistance through universal childcare, but also really shoring up this side of things and ensuring that we have support for those who are entering into this field of work and encouraging them to do so and then also, on that other side, building more spaces for our children — childcare spaces throughout our entire territory.

So, there is really great work on the part of the branch led by a really great experienced director who has a fantastic team around her. Again, I'm excited to see how this evolves. Last week, I had the opportunity to meet with the new minister, Minister Gould, who is responsible for this entire program in Canada. She really was grateful for the leadership that Yukon has had and is practically leading the country in this particular area of early learning and childcare and access to universal childcare.

So, I'm very excited about the work that we're going to do with our federal partners, and I am looking forward to sharing best practices that we are developing in the Yukon.

Ms. White: I do appreciate the minister for that answer, but what I was looking for was the assurance that — again, different programs and different collections of teachers teach different things, and they are looking more for self-directed professional development, not an overarching, community-based — or being directed as it is right now.

I know that, for example, folks said that they were interested in trauma-informed practices and being able to access that, for example, from the University of British Columbia. This isn't about it being directed by government but about self-direction. Again, schools for professional development are able to make decisions about what they want to learn and how they want to learn it. I was hoping that it would be similar for early childhood education.

I'll leave that for now and move on.

One of the things that I think has been highlighted around the Hidden Valley issues — well, there are a lot. To be fair, there are a lot.

There was the online meeting with parents of students from Hidden Valley Elementary School, and the RCMP released a timeline of known abuses of students. The timeline refers to an abuse that occurred in the 2015-16 school year — and I'm quoting — that it was “handled internally” and never referred to the RCMP.

The reason why I bring that forward is that it highlights a systemic issue within the Department of Education, and that's a concern, which the Yukon NDP have highlighted in different ways.

What steps are being taken to make sure that systemic changes are made within the Department of Education to ensure that future abuses are prevented? What internal workings — how will each administrator know what steps have to be taken so that no issues are ever handled internally again?

Hon. Ms. McLean: This is important. All of the questions today have been important. This is a highly sensitive

topic that we've been talking about since the beginning of the Sitting and will be talking about for some time to come, I think — rightfully so.

Yes, we did have a virtual meeting, which occurred about a week or so ago, I think. Days are just rolling into each other. The RCMP did release a preliminary finding. It was distributed to all Hidden Valley parents and guardians, current and former, following that meeting. That happened on November 13.

We are currently still reviewing that information and timeline provided, and the department will be responding in more detail soon. That being said, I have been clear since day one that we feel that there are a lot of questions that need answering. I launched an independent review by Amanda Rogers, and I have been clear since day one and have said it many times in response to questions — I have asked Ms. Rogers to go where she needs to go. This timeline has been released that refers to an incident that was dealt with internally and was never reported to the RCMP in 2015-16. Well, that is where the investigation will go.

I have been clear around that since day one. We are really looking to that broad review to provide us with very clear fact-finding and clear recommendations of where we will go next.

I know that we don't have a lot of time, and I did talk a little bit earlier — and I am not sure if the member opposite was able to hear where things are at with one of our other schools. I talked about the issues that are unfolding, as we speak, at Jack Hulland and that, very recently, issues have come to light of the use of holds and physical interventions to manage student behaviour at Jack Hulland and that this may be a breach of school policy and the *Criminal Code of Canada*. This information has now been reported to the RCMP and Family and Children's Services. We understand that an investigation is now underway to ensure that we provide full and accurate information to support the investigation.

The department is conducting a fact-finding review to look at workplace risk assessments at Jack Hulland, including the Grove Street program, as well as other relevant reports involving the use of holds and isolation rooms over the past five years.

So, we have been working with the school administration, school council, staff, and families and have heard their concerns around student violence over the last couple of months, so all of this is unfolding as we speak.

I think that this is directly related in terms of the way in which we are responding. There is a lot more to come on this. The Yukon Teachers' Association has been engaged, as has the school council. Staff and families have been notified. There is a school council meeting on Wednesday that I will attend with senior officials. As we move forward, we need to support all of those who have been willing to have courageous conversations and ask these difficult questions around student and staff safety. I am committed to ensuring that this is how we move forward in dealing with very difficult situations in our schools.

Deputy Chair, seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mountainview that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

May the House have a report from the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the House do now adjourn.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to

Speaker: This House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

The following legislative return was tabled November 22, 2021:

35-1-14

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Tredger related to general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — carbon tax tracking (Pillai)

The following document was filed November 22, 2021:

35-1-28

Formation of Working Group on the Better Building Program, letter re (dated November 21, 2021) from Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services, to Gord Curran, President, Association of Yukon Communities (Mostyn)

Written notice was given of the following motions November 22, 2021:

Motion No. 238

Re: improving midwifery in Yukon (White)

Motion No. 239

Re: establishing a publicly funded community walk-in clinic (White)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 36

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, November 23, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Sandy Silver	Clondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier Government House Leader* Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
Hon. Nils Clarke	Riverdale North	Minister of Highways and Public Works; Environment
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Government House Leader* Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Minister of Economic Development; Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Jeanie McLean	Mountainview	Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

Currie Dixon	Leader of the Official Opposition Copperbelt North	Scott Kent	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Yvonne Clarke	Porter Creek Centre	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Emily Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Annie Blake	Vuntut Gwitchin

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

*Government House Leader: Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee to November 4, 2021; Hon. John Streicker from November 5, 2021

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon**

Tuesday, November 23, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.
We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. The following motion has not been placed on the Notice Paper at the request of the member: Motion No. 237, notice of which was given by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin yesterday.

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will proceed at this time with the Order Paper.

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would like to ask all Members of the Legislative Assembly to welcome a few guests whom we have here today for the tribute for the Leckie Awards. We have with us Mr. Allan Nixon, who is the vice-president of BMC, and also Joel Ray, who is the chief mining engineer of BMC, and they are one of the award winners today. We also have Glenna Southwick, who is the community award winner, and Glenna has her son Eric Walker with her and co-workers Tammy Johnson and Tori Chislett. We have, from Archer Cathro, Heather Burrell, the president and managing director, and sitting next to her — you can try to pick out who is who here — is the operations manager, Liz Smith. We have Mike Burke, who is a director with the Yukon Chamber of Mines. We have Anne Lewis, who is with the Yukon Mining Alliance and Yukon Women in Mining. We also have Brooke Rudolph, the executive director of the Klondike Placer Miners' Association, and could we also please welcome Lorelee Johnstone, the incoming and new president of the Yukon Chamber of Mines.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I ask my colleagues to welcome two members of our integrated restorative justice unit who are here with us today for the tribute, Christina Laing and Deanna Thick. Thank you very much for being here today.

I know that there are others who couldn't be here who are listening in. Thank you very much.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Restorative Justice Week

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal Party to pay tribute to the national Restorative Justice

Week. Initiated in 1996 by the Correctional Service Canada, this annual week of recognition has since expanded into an international event. Restorative Justice Week allows us to acknowledge restorative justice principles and reflect on the efforts made to find alternative, culturally relevant, and restorative ways to deal with crime outside of the current criminal justice system.

Restorative justice processes encompass respect, reparations, restoration, and reconciliation. Restorative processes are based on the understanding that crime is a violation of people and relationships and focuses on repairing and healing the harm caused by crime. The goal of restorative justice processes is to reach meaningful and fair outcomes through inclusion, open communication, and truth.

In the Yukon, restorative justice processes are delivered through the hard work and dedication of Yukon First Nation governments, community justice committees, restorative justice service providers, families, elders and community members, and the Department of Justice's integrated restorative justice unit.

As a government, we are proud to be working with Yukon First Nation governments to advance and enhance the use of restorative processes throughout the territory. Restorative processes are unique and individual across Canada, although the most commonly used restorative processes include community conferencing, victim-offender mediation, community justice forums, and community circles.

It is an honour to pay tribute today to the Council of Yukon First Nations and all of the Yukon First Nation governments that lead and oversee the majority of restorative programs and services in the territory. I would like to highlight and pay tribute to the First Nation restorative justice working group that has been formed to collaborate on restorative justice and what it can look like across the territory.

I know that we have listening Deputy Chief Simon Nagano of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, who is a member of that committee.

This group has been tasked with collaborating on the development of a strategic plan, exploring opportunities for innovation and delivery of restorative justice processes, creating culturally relevant and meaningful restorative processes specific to the Yukon and to each respective First Nations government, and fostering communication about current services, emerging challenges, and new opportunities. I am grateful for the dedication and the hard work of each individual who has taken part in this important working group.

Finally, I would like to note that the Council of Yukon First Nations, the Yukon RCMP, and the Government of Yukon are co-hosting a virtual event to pay tribute to national Restorative Justice Week. The event will be held on Friday, November 26 and is an opportunity to learn about new initiatives in what restorative practices look like here in the Yukon.

At this time, I would like to sincerely thank all Yukon First Nation governments, community organizations, and individuals in the Yukon for their continued dedication and hard work in advancing restorative justice processes.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to recognize the members of the restorative justice integrated unit who were not able to be

in attendance today. I know that they are listening in. Their hard work is leading this work. Thank you very much.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize Restorative Justice Week in Canada, from November 21 to 28. I would like to acknowledge the work being done by the Council of Yukon First Nations and First Nation governments in this area, as well as the work of the Yukon Community Wellness Court, which has been successful over the last 14 years since it was implemented with the goal of building safer communities by working with offenders in the criminal justice system on dealing with issues contributing to their criminal behaviour and working through a holistic wellness plan with a team of professionals and community supports. As members may know, it has been found to be successful, based on an independent evaluation of the work that was done in this program.

So, I would conclude my comments by noting that we do appreciate the work that is being done by people throughout the territory in restorative justice programs, and I want to acknowledge those who have been successful in their results.

Applause

Ms. Blake: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate Restorative Justice Week. Since 1996, this week has been used to acknowledge the positive impacts of restorative justice in Canada. At this year's National Restorative Justice Symposium, Valarie Binder and Brenda Warren will be representing the Yukon on behalf of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation.

There are deep indigenous roots in restorative justice. For decades, indigenous justice leaders fought for it until government finally listened. When harm happens, people on all sides need support. No matter how a person becomes justice-involved, restorative justice preserves their dignity. Instead of treating people with punishment, restorative justice is focused on healing people who commit harm and the people affected by the harm so they can find a meaningful path forward. This concept is the first step toward a better understanding of justice.

Now, 20 years later, many people are calling for transformative justice. Transformative justice looks beyond the individual and at the system instead. It asks: What problems with the system pushed this person to harm others or themselves? How can we transform those systems to help people? If we reduce suffering, we also reduce harm.

I look forward to working together in this House and in the territory to transform the way we understand justice. Thank you, Valarie and Brenda, for upholding these values and representing Yukon at the national symposium this week.

Applause

In recognition of the Robert E. Leckie Awards recipients

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise today on behalf of all Members of the Legislative Assembly to pay tribute to the recipients of the Leckie Awards that are traditionally presented

during the annual Geoscience Forum. The COVID situation has led to the postponing of the forum until the new year; however, we still felt that it was important to recognize some outstanding members of the mining community regardless.

The Robert E. Leckie Awards honour excellence in environmental stewardship, outstanding social responsibility, and innovation in mining practices. These awards were created as a tribute to Robert Leckie, who worked as a mining inspector in Mayo from 1987 until he passed away in November 1999. Mr. Leckie was an innovator who promoted planned reclamation, research, and cooperation that benefited both government and industry.

The awards given in his honour recognize miners for their exceptional reclamation and restoration efforts. Before I announce the award winners, I would just like to give a shout-out to the mining industry, which as a whole has worked to keep their operations safe during COVID-19. It has been a lot of work, but I really want to thank them for their efforts to keep the territory safe over the past two seasons.

The Leckie Award for responsible and innovative exploration and mining practices goes to Slate River Mining. The company deserved this award because their innovations demonstrated long-term work that exceeds best practices at placer mining. This includes forested leave strips, a small equipment footprint, low fuel usage, and solar systems for camp electricity. Slate River Mining has done an exemplary job of mining on the Indian River and has a small crew that is typically the father and son working in tandem. They are very worthy recipients of the Leckie Award.

I would just like to add that I had the opportunity to go and visit Slate River Mining this past summer. I spoke with Pascal McBurney. I didn't meet his dad, but I did meet Meghan and I would just like to acknowledge that they have a new young person in their family, Cory, and I'm sure Pascal and Megan are looking forward to the day when she takes over their operations.

The Leckie Award for excellence in environmental stewardship in quartz mining goes to Selwyn Chihong Mining Ltd. Their mine site straddles the Northwest Territories border 165 kilometres east of Ross River. In 2020, Selwyn removed a significant amount of waste material and special waste, including over 160 barrels of hazardous waste that remained from the previous operator. Selwyn also did soil testing to ensure that the soil was not contaminated around the site. I understand that any soil that was contaminated is being treated on-site at Selwyn's land treatment facility. Selwyn is committed to contracting opportunities for Yukon residents and is also collaborating with First Nations to achieve a culturally integrated workspace. Thank you to Selwyn for their hard work on the site.

I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge the awards given by the Yukon Chamber of Mines and the Yukon Prospectors Association. The Yukon Chamber of Mines awarded the community award to Glenna Southwick, an employee with the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. Ms. Southwick's work with the Whitehorse mining recorder's office shows unwavering, transparent, and honest

guidance through the policies and procedures for staking, recording, and filing assessments on mineral claims in the Yukon.

The Yukon Prospectors Association presented their Prospector of the Year Award to Yukon-based geologist Jérôme de Pasquale.

Last but certainly not least, the Yukon Chamber of Mines awarded their member of the year award to BMC Minerals.

I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to each of this year's winners. On behalf of Yukoners, I express our appreciation for the work that they have done and the positive example that they have set for us all.

On behalf of all members of this House, we acknowledge the substantial efforts by mining companies, operators, and others who go above and beyond the call of duty to support, inspire, and sustain responsible mining operations here in the Yukon. Thank you.

Applause

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under returns and documents for tabling, the Chair has for tabling the 2020 annual report of the Yukon Ombudsman and Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Yukon Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner.

Are there any other returns or documents for tabling?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I have for tabling two legislative returns referencing written questions posed to the Department of Education.

Ms. White: I have for tabling a letter directed to the Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board urging him to amend Bill No. 8 to include presumptive cancer coverage for wildland forest firefighters and the briefing note that was used in British Columbia to effect that change. They are from the BC General Employees' Union.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Cathers: I rise today to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to work with the private sector to improve access to reliable, affordable high-speed Internet service.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

United Nations Climate Change Conference

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise to speak about the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties, otherwise known as COP 26.

Over two weeks in Glasgow, Scotland, world leaders gathered to discuss all matters related to climate change for the critical decade ahead. While recognizing every country's unique realities and challenges, leaders from across the globe talked about the need to urgently address the biggest challenge of our generation — climate change. Leaders from coastal and island nations shared stories of their communities being inundated with rising sea levels. Other leaders shared stories of destructive wildfires, desertification, and biodiversity loss.

Closer to home, we know that we are also dealing with the effects of a changing climate. The evolving situation in southern British Columbia demonstrates the destructive impacts that climate change is having, and will continue to have, on people, homes, critical infrastructure, and the environment. In this past year in the Yukon, we experienced unprecedented flooding unlike anything that we had seen before.

To address this crisis, a collective global approach is required. Further to this, a number of commitments were made at COP 26. The conference culminated with the adoption of the *Glasgow Climate Pact*, a wide-ranging decision toward a more ambitious climate response. In a first for a UN climate agreement, the pact reached by the end of COP 26 urged countries to phase down coal and fossil-fuel subsidies. The *Glasgow Climate Pact* is critical and yet may not be enough of a commitment in reducing global emissions and keeping the average global warming increase below 1.5 degrees.

Canada played a significant role in negotiating this pact, which includes phasing out fossil-fuel subsidies, a requirement to phase down coal power, and new commitments to allocations of resources to loss and damages to the countries that have contributed the least to the cause of climate change while being exposed to its severe impacts.

The Yukon has a role to play. The Government of Yukon's recent commitment to reduce emissions by 45 percent by 2030 from 2010 levels in the territory is in close alignment with the critically important 1.5-degree warming limit. Furthermore, Yukon initiatives, such as *Our Clean Future* and the recently announced Yukon Climate Leadership Council, demonstrate Yukon's action in addressing climate change. We are making progress on several ambitious commitments set out in *Our Clean Future*, and this work will only intensify over the coming years.

With COP 26 now closed, we hope that we can all reflect on the immediate action required to address the climate emergency. I think about how Yukoners, Canadians, and those across the world are being impacted. Climate change is here. It is all too real, and it will continue to impact all aspects of our lives.

Now more than ever, Mr. Speaker, we must take collective action to minimize the impacts to future generations.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, first off, I would like to say that we appreciate the effort of those countries and individuals who are taking action on climate change. The United Nations Climate Change Conference, known as COP 26, in Scotland provided another opportunity for leaders

to meet to discuss how to mitigate and address the impacts. Those of us who live in the north have been experiencing the impacts of climate change for years. Our renewable resources councils, Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, and our seniors and elders have seen the changes. We have experienced the effects of forest fires, flooding, and road washouts. We know how important it is for governments to work together with our communities to ensure that the emergency preparedness plans are in place.

So, Mr. Speaker, our hearts do go out to our southern neighbors in British Columbia who have seen entire communities evacuated and supply routes cut off. That's why we support action to prevent climate change. We need effective solutions. Those solutions come from people who know how they can best leverage local actions. That's why it was disappointing to have the government cut the youth ambassador position. That position provided a great opportunity for younger Yukoners to learn about the global crisis and become future leaders for our climate action. Previously, these youth ambassadors attended high-level meetings, such as COP 26, so we hope that the government rethinks this stance moving forward, because we agree that the Yukon needs to do its part to help reduce the effects of climate change.

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, overall, I have to say that COP 26 felt a bit flat. Maybe it was the indigenous leaders, like Chief Tizya-Tramm, opting out because they were tired of being their tokens. Maybe it's because we all know that the time for talking has passed. Maybe it was the feeling that really hard decisions are being kicked down the road. It's a feeling that I hear from Yukoners a lot — that the hard decisions are being kicked down the road. How else can they feel when this government creates a double standard for climate goals, a 45-percent reduction for most of us, and then the cop-out: intensity-based targets for the mining industry? How else can they feel when the government recommends that only 50 percent of the wetlands in the Dawson land use plan need to be protected when wetlands are some of our best natural carbon sinks?

There are people out there who are taking action on climate change every day. Yukon communities are leading the way to turning off their diesel generators. Land-back leaders in Wet'suwet'en territory are fighting for their sovereignty. Our very own Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change is making bold recommendations that go beyond superficial fixes to meaningful change. A moment from COP 26 that did shine for me and that really did stand out was when 23-year-old Yukoner Ashley Cummings spoke alongside climate advocates. Ashley told world leaders how government inaction on climate change is failing indigenous people across the north. She spoke about how mental health and well-being are tied to climate justice. We are so proud of her advocacy and how she represented the territory on the international stage.

We are immensely proud of the 45-percent target in greenhouse gas reductions that the Yukon NDP negotiated for. This is the most aggressive climate change target in the country, but that doesn't mean we can stop there.

Before the minister accuses the opposition parties of voting against climate action when we have voiced our concerns around proposed changes to the municipal and taxation acts, I will remind him and his colleagues that the Yukon NDP do support building retrofits. What we don't support is one government imposing its programs on another level of government. We remain optimistic that the Minister of Community Services is working hard with municipalities to address their questions and concerns. We hope that this work will get municipalities to be supportive of the better building program and that we will be able to vote for it in this session.

In the meantime, here are my questions for the minister. He said that climate change is one of the biggest challenges facing his generation, so will he commit to real climate targets for the mining industry instead of intensity-based targets? Will he prioritize protecting our natural carbon sinks, such as wetlands? Will he commit to fully implementing the recommendations of the Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the contributions from the members opposite on this vital topic. We are in the middle of a climate crisis, and Yukoners are seeing the impacts of climate change first-hand. The scale and intensity of these severe weather events, like the unprecedented flooding in the Yukon this summer or the flooding and infrastructure crisis that BC is facing right now, will not allow us to ignore these fundamental and profound changes any longer. When it comes to climate change, much like COVID-19, we are in this together. It is only through collective action that we will be able to address this problem.

It is our responsibility as a government to take action now. We cannot afford to have leadership that does not look at climate change as an emergency. In the 14 years of government by the Yukon Party, they refused to support climate action initiatives, and with no vision or forethought, the current Leader of the Official Opposition even took the position that he did not think that the territory-wide emission-reduction targets were the right thing to do. Well, Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear: They are definitely the right thing to do. Yukoners take some pride in the fact that, since our government was elected, we have made significant progress in reducing our emissions as a territory. We are on a path to achieving our emission-reduction goals outlined in *Our Clean Future*.

Mr. Speaker, we have been able to begin to implement a plastic bag ban, incentivize Yukoners to purchase electric vehicles through rebates, and supported high-performance building retrofits and smart electric heating installations, among other actions.

We cannot stop there; I can assure you of that. Although significant action has been made in addressing climate change by this government, no one is doing a victory lap here. I am under no illusions that there is still significant, heavy lifting to be done.

This Assembly has an opportunity right now to continue to make changes that will help Yukoners reduce their emissions and save money. Our government has brought forward

amendments to the *Assessment and Taxation Act* and the *Municipal Act*, which, if passed, would allow the government to develop the better building program. The better building program would provide Yukoners and Yukon businesses in participating municipalities and outside city limits with loans of up to \$50,000 for home energy retrofits and \$100,000 energy retrofits to businesses at the prime lending rate, the lowest lending rate in Canada.

We have tabled letters of support for the better building program from the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce, CPAWS Yukon, and the Yukon Federation of Labour.

The results are clear. There is support for the better building program. We are not kicking —

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Order, please. The member has the floor.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: We are not kicking this can down the road. I urge all members opposite to support these amendments that will save Yukoners money and reduce our emissions as a territory, paving the path for a greener, healthier, more resilient future for our children and for all future generations.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Health care services

Mr. Dixon: We remain concerned with the serious situation facing the Yukon with regard to family medicine. There is a growing wait-list for people seeking a family doctor, and efforts to recruit more family doctors have not been successful. One-fifth of Yukoners do not have a family doctor. In fact, we haven't seen a new family doctor set up practice here in several years. However, there have been proposals to help address this. One of those is the establishment of a government-run walk-in clinic.

Yesterday, the minister did not provide a clear answer as to whether or not she is considering support for a new walk-in clinic, so I would like to ask again: Will the government lead the creation of a new walk-in clinic for family medicine in Whitehorse?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am very pleased to be able to stand and speak to Yukoners about health care here in the territory. Again, it will be necessary for me to correct the statistic that was presented in the preamble to this question, which is that one-fifth of Yukoners don't have a family doctor. That is not, in fact, the math. It is 21 percent, which is not one-fifth.

Our government is keenly aware of the shortage of physicians here in the territory — and frankly across Canada and internationally — as we deal with a global pandemic with respect to COVID-19. In addition to that, we have increased the types of specialists who are here in the territory in the last number of years — having new pediatricians, new psychiatrists, and additional surgeons who perform surgeries here in the territory so that people do not have to travel. These are all important aspects of the improvement of health and

social services and the improvement of primary care and medicine here in the territory.

I look forward to continuing this answer.

Mr. Dixon: I stand corrected. There are more Yukoners without a family doctor than I thought.

So, I did ask a very simple question and that was whether or not the minister would support the creation of a new government-run walk-in clinic here in Whitehorse, so I will let that question stand again.

Will the minister support the creation of a new government-run walk-in clinic here in Whitehorse?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: As I am sure the members opposite know — but it is always important to remind Yukoners — that the *Putting People First* report noted that family physicians and primary care were a key concern for Yukoners. In addition to that, the *Putting People First* report provides us with 76 recommendations and a path forward for improving medical services, primary care, wraparound services, and individual service for all Yukoners with respect to important, critical medical services. We recognize that Yukoners will have questions about the *Putting People First* process and how we will be moving forward.

I think that it is very important to note that we are working with our partners with respect to medical services and primary care services. One of the models noted in the question about a walk-in clinic will be adopted with the bilingual health centre that will be opening in 2022. That primary health care centre will be set in Whitehorse and is expected to reduce some of the pressures on the primary health care system. The Department of Health and Social Services has also been exploring other opportunities that I'm happy to speak about.

Mr. Dixon: I am not sure that I heard a clear answer there, but I will move on.

Family doctors have told us that the business case for opening a new clinic in the Yukon just isn't there right now. In fact, we have unfortunately seen a clinic close this year. The result is that there are 2,500 Yukoners on the wait-list for a family doctor. This is an issue that requires leadership from the government.

Another proposal is for government to work with the medical community to create the conditions where family doctors have the confidence and support from government to open a new clinic.

Will the government work directly with the medical community to create the conditions where family doctors are given the right incentives to open a new family medicine clinic here in the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: That is exactly what we're doing. We are working with the Yukon Medical Association in partnership; we are working with Dr. Katharine Smart, who is the president of the Canadian Medical Association. This is a key issue on their agenda for this year, addressing it across Canada. We are working with the Yukon Medical Association here in the territory. We have provided them over \$4 million for recruitment opportunities for them to lead. We are working with them with respect to the polyclinic options that are set out in *Putting People First*, as well as the opportunity to enhance

businesses here in the territory that are run by physicians to provide Yukoners with primary care.

We look forward to those opportunities in the near future. As I have said, the bilingual health centre is one of the opportunities for walk-in services for Yukoners. We are also increasing nurse practitioners. We are increasing opportunities for virtual care for Yukoners across the territory, and we continue to work with all of our partners to provide important critical care for Yukon patients.

Question re: Midwifery legislation

Ms. McLeod: Last week, an article in the *Yukon News* made it clear that the development of regulations for midwifery has not gone as planned. There has been a significant gap in service, and this has meant that Yukoners seeking the support of a midwife have had to leave the Yukon in order to receive that service. Likewise, we have heard concerns raised by the Yukon Association for Birth Choices as well as the midwifery implementation committee. It appears to us that there is much more room for collaboration.

Will the government agree to improve midwifery services in Yukon by reviewing the regulations that are currently in place for midwives?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm very pleased today to rise and speak about the midwifery program and services that are being adopted here in the territory. Our government remains committed to moving forward with the integration of funded and regulated midwife services into the Yukon's health care system.

This work, including the recruitment of midwives, is underway. This new health program here in the territory — in order to have it integrated into our medical system, we are working closely with the Public Service Commission and with the registered midwives organizations. Our government has worked closely with our integrated committee to implement midwifery, including having midwife experts participate and, in fact, be hired by the Department of Health and Social Services to guide this process. I think that it's well in hand. It's in the hands of experts. We are working hard to implement the midwife program here in the territory. It is new and it will serve Yukoners well.

Ms. McLeod: We have heard from general practitioners that they didn't feel as involved in the regulatory development as they should have been. This has led to resistance to the idea of granting midwives hospital privileges.

Will the government bring all affected stakeholders together and find a path forward for granting hospital privileges to midwives as part of a truly collaborative system that supports pregnant women?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think the question indicates that perhaps the opposition is trying to catch up. That work is well underway. Local and national midwife experts have provided advice on the midwife regulation that is needed to bring it into force sooner than later to help the transition from unregulated services — which is what has existed in the past — and into our health care system and to be supported by health care system partners.

I have been working closely with the Yukon Hospital Corporation. I know that the Department of Health and Social Services has as well. The integration of midwives into the bylaws of the Yukon Hospital Corporation is well underway. That is part of the work — just one piece of the work that is necessary to bring the midwife process of integrated and paid midwifery into the system here in the territory.

Ms. McLeod: One concern that several observers have noted is that the Yukon will struggle to attract high-quality midwives to the Yukon if they aren't properly supported or compensated. The level of pay that the government has offered midwives has not been competitive.

Will the government agree to consult with affected stakeholders to ensure that the rate of pay for midwives is competitive and fair?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Again, an important question for Yukoners to know — work has already been completed with respect to this. As the new health program in the Yukon is developed, we are working closely with the Public Service Commission to review the classification, and compensation rates for registered midwives to support attracting and retaining experienced midwives here in the territory is part of that process. These positions will be posted in the coming days with more competitive compensation. That work is done.

Question re: Wildland firefighters workers' compensation coverage

Ms. White: A letter sent to the minister yesterday, which I tabled today, urges the Government of Yukon to add presumptive cancer coverage for wildland firefighters. It says, and I quote: "An elevated risk for cancer is expected among wildfire firefighters, especially among long-serving frontline workers."

On November 17, I tabled a letter from the Whitehorse Fire Fighters Association stating — and I quote: "Exposure to smoke over long periods of time with no PPE causes a myriad of health problems."

Wildland firefighters do not use respiratory protection and are exposed to smoke and other substances for longer periods of time than their municipal counterparts. The evidence is there.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister follow the evidence and add presumptive cancer coverage for wildland firefighters?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the question this afternoon. I too have been in touch with the International Association of Fire Fighters on this issue. I have been speaking to wildfire groups as well. I am looking at the evidence, I am looking at the costs, I am looking at the availability of PPE, I am looking at how our wildfire teams in the bush work, and I am more than happy to take the evidence that I am presented with and consider it as we make decisions on this piece of legislation that is now before the House — which is, I must say, the most progressive piece of legislation in the country. I am very, very proud that this government has drafted this legislation with the help of my colleagues. I know that it will be an absolute beacon of hope for injured workers across the country once it passes this House.

Ms. White: I disagree; it is not quite the most progressive legislation, but it could be if we included wildland firefighters. Lots of us in the Yukon have friends and neighbours who are wildland firefighters. These people are first responders. They risk their own safety to protect all Yukoners, our forests, wildlife, and infrastructure. They risk not only their safety but also their health to protect us.

As Chad Thomas, CEO of Yukon First Nations Wildfire, said — and I quote: “... we are all doing the same really tough job. You get a lot of scars, some visible and some not...” And yet, the minister is hesitating to expand the presumptive cancer coverage to wildland firefighters, even though all other firefighters in the Yukon will continue to be covered in the new act.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister agree to cover wildland firefighters for presumptive cancer coverage?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am going to respectfully take issue with the preamble of the member opposite. This is, right now, the most progressive piece of legislation in the country — period. It is already. There is no other jurisdiction in the country with the scope of coverage that this bill will have when it passes this House, and now we are talking about adding more coverage to that piece of legislation. I am happy to have that conversation. We, on this side of the House, have family members who are firefighters and wildland firefighters as well — we have friends and we have relatives. This is an issue that touches every one of us, and we are in government to look at these things and look at all of the implications of our actions.

The proposed motion — it hasn’t even manifested itself yet — came to my attention just a few weeks ago, and this piece of legislation — the most cutting-edge piece of legislation in the country — has gone through an extensive consultation period and now, at the last minute, we are having more added to it. I am doing my due diligence to see what the implications of those requests are, and I will report back to the House once I know what they are.

Ms. White: Well, it is good for the minister that I have been clear on what I am asking for, and that is coverage of wildland firefighters for presumptive cancer coverage.

As our population grows in the Yukon and the effects of climate change intensify, we can only expect wildland firefighters to face increased health risks and be exposed to more harmful substances.

The Yukon has a rare opportunity right now to do right by wildland firefighters. The legislation is already open and it has been on the floor on the Legislative Assembly; we are just waiting for it to be called back. So, we are not asking for a complete redo. The government’s own “what we heard” report recommends — and I quote: “Expand the cancer presumption to include all Yukon firefighters, including wildland firefighters.”

Mr. Speaker, British Columbia already set the precedent for wildland firefighter presumption by doing this in 2019. When will the minister follow the lead of British Columbia and his own “what we heard” document and expand presumptive cancer coverage to wildland firefighters?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The job that wildland fire does for our territory is beyond repute. We all depend on them, and we greatly admire the work that they do. We are absolutely in lockstep with our colleagues across the way.

What is at issue here is whether or not to extend the coverage that we bestow on structural firefighters to wildland firefighters who operate in the territory in two very different environments. I am doing my due diligence to see what exactly the implications of that decision are before the House in a very short period of time. It was raised in the “what we heard” document by the IAFF, but they didn’t actually take the next step so that we would ask the stakeholders about it, because they weren’t prepared to take that step. They wanted to support their colleagues, but there was no fulsome discussion during the consultation.

Anyway, this is before the House. I understand that. I am doing my due diligence within the department to find out what the implications of these changes are. That is the responsible thing to do as a government. I am taking that responsible view, and I will report back to the members opposite when I have that information.

Question re: Psychology profession regulation

Ms. Clarke: In the Yukon, psychology is completely unregulated. This means that, unlike the vast majority of Canadians, Yukoners have no guarantee that they are receiving high-quality, evidence-informed psychological services from a regulated health professional when they go to a psychologist. Earlier this week, the government indicated that it could take up to four years to regulate psychology.

Will the government agree to speed up the process and regulate psychology before this coming spring?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I really appreciate the question about health profession modernization on the floor of the Legislature this afternoon. I have met with the Yukon psychologists association just at the beginning of the session. They brought their concerns to me.

I have absolutely heard those concerns and I’m working very closely with the Department of Community Services to fast-track changes that would actually allow us to have some sort of oversight over our psychologists in this territory. The department did an interview with CBC, I believe. They did note that it does take a long time to get legislation drafted and put in place and that’s the ideal situation. However, there are other alternatives that we can pursue and the department is looking at those as well.

I know that this is an issue for psychologists. I absolutely understand the issue and we are working very closely to make sure that we have an answer for that profession and many others as well. Physiotherapists is another one, Mr. Speaker. We’re working very closely to find these solutions for these professional associations.

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, the government took four years to regulate midwifery, and when they brought in those regulations, they unfortunately eliminated that profession. We want to ensure that the government learns from this mistake during the process of regulating psychology. In order to reduce

the burden on their territorial government, the Northwest Territories signed an agreement with Alberta so that the NWT psychologist would be registered through that province. By following this example, the Yukon could speed up the process of regulating psychology and address this health care gap.

Will the government follow the example of the NWT and establish a partnership with Alberta so that our psychologists can be regulated through the College of Alberta Psychologists?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I'm having a hard time this afternoon following the narrative woven by the opposition. They made a suggestion just recently that we deregulate midwifery and now they're asking us to regulate psychologists, which is the right thing to do. The fact is that we have regulated midwifery and we are in the process of getting midwives up here. I will say that I was writing about midwives in the territory in 1992 under that Yukon Party government that didn't get 'er done. I was writing about midwifery in 2002 when the House Leader of the Yukon Party had the ability to get midwives in place but didn't get 'er done. I was writing about midwifery in 2004 when the Yukon Party was in power and didn't get 'er done. Here we are in 2021 — it's far too long, Mr. Speaker, but the Liberal government has gotten it done and we're now in the process of implementing that and the members opposite do not like it.

Mr. Speaker, I am more than happy to find a good path forward for psychologists; I've said that, and we will do that.

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, the fact that psychology is completely unregulated in the Yukon is a significant health care gap. When will the psychology regulations for the Yukon be in place?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I have indicated in the House this afternoon already, I have spoken to the psychologists association. I have heard their concerns; they are legitimate. I do understand this gap in the regulation of psychologists. This gap isn't new, Mr. Speaker; it has existed for a very, very long time — a very long time. As a matter of fact, the regulation of health care professions has been allowed to lapse and fall idle for years and years and years and years. So, now we are fit with this backlog of professions that are really being governed under legislation that was current in 1980. It's unacceptable that it was allowed to lapse this long. For 15, 16, 17 years, this has not been addressed. So, now we are addressing it, and yeah, there is a backlog, but we will get to it, just like we did for midwives. We understand how important this is to these professionals. They need these rules. They need to be operating in a modern environment and we are delivering on that modernization initiative, and we are going to continue to do the good work on behalf of Yukoners, providing a stable government in a time of crisis in the territory.

Question re: *Workers' Compensation Act* amendments

Mr. Hassard: The government currently has legislation before the House to amend the *Workers' Compensation Act*. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the government sets the business of the House and decides if and when we debate legislation. We and the Third Party would like to make amendments to this

legislation, so we are curious: Will the government agree not to use the guillotine clause on this legislation and allow the opposition parties to propose amendments to the legislation?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I am very sorry, again — it is great to be speaking with the member opposite after he was benched for so long — 12 days. Honest to goodness, I have spoken about this already this afternoon on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. I am sorry the member opposite can't deviate from his questions; I wish he had more, but he obviously can't come up with new ones.

I have said already that I am doing my due diligence on this file to make sure I know the implications of these last-minute amendments to this piece of legislation that has been in drafting for years. I am surprised they haven't brought these concerns forward before, but here we are now at the last minute, at the very eleventh hour. We know that the opposition is reluctant to make eleventh-hour decisions on things, but here we are. I am doing my due diligence in a very short period of time to make sure I know the implications of the amendments that are being put forward by both opposition parties in the last week of this Sitting.

Mr. Speaker, I will do my very best, and we will have this discussion on the floor of the Legislature when the bill comes back before us.

Mr. Hassard: As I said in my first question, if the minister had been listening: The government sets the business, and he could have brought this bill forward at any time. My question was actually whether the government would agree not to guillotine this.

Moving on, the opposition parties would like to add wildland firefighters to the WCB amendments before the House so they are covered for presumptive cancer coverage. As first responders, wildfire fighters regularly risk their own lives to protect the lives of others and deserve to be treated equally to other firefighters.

Yesterday, the minister, as well as the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Leader of the Third Party, received a letter that was tabled today. Will the government listen to this request and allow this legislation to be debated here in this House and amended?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I have said, due diligence takes some time. The Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board is running the implications of these changes to ground, and when I have a full understanding — as full as I can have in such a short period of time — of the implications of these amendments, I am going to bring the legislation back and we will have a discussion on the floor of the Legislature and see how it goes.

I have already spoken about how impressive the job of Wildland Fire Management is. I want to make one point perfectly clear, because it seems to get lost on the floor of the Legislature. If wildland firefighters get a cancer, they are covered by the WCB. It doesn't change anything, except that it just skips an assessment phase. If wildland firefighters get sick in any way — or any profession, if they get sick in any way — they can still get coverage through Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, which exists to provide compensation

for workers injured on the job in the course of their duties. I do not want to send a message in any way that workers are not covered. If you are injured or have an occupational disease, see your WCB and get coverage.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, we still see no commitment from the minister to actually bring this forward for debate without guillotining it.

Again, we and the government have also received a letter from the Northern Air Transport Association, as well as 15 prominent members of the business community, raising concerns with this legislation. Their concerns are related to section 127 of the act as it relates to liabilities for those operating vehicles. As written, this section of the act would be inconsistent with many other jurisdictions. We would like to make minor amendments to this at Committee as well.

Will the government agree to bring this legislation forward to Committee so that opposition parties can propose their amendments?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have this conversation. I believe that we have already started to have this conversation on the floor of the Legislature when the bill crossed into second reading.

We know that the amendment that the member opposite just referred to that came through from the Northern Air Transport Association refers to a change that was actually a request made to both the New Democratic Party government of a former Premier and the Yukon Party government of a former Premier. In both cases when this came forward, both governments decided of their own volition to not proceed with it. Why? It is because the Yukon is actually benefitting from getting compensation from a much larger national pool of money as opposed to just a local pool.

I think that there are profound implications to the Yukon fund if we narrow the focus of coverage, but if the opposition parties want to go that route and potentially bring higher rates to our business community, then that's a decision that this House is going to have to make. I know where I stand on that, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of opposition private members' business

Mr. Kent: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, November 24, 2021. They are Motion No. 236, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt North, and Motion No. 113, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt North.

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Third Party to be called on Wednesday, November 24, 2021. It is Motion No. 239, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

Speaker: We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 9: *Act to Amend the Cannabis Control and Regulation Act (2021)* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 9, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Pillai.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 9, entitled *Act to Amend the Cannabis Control and Regulation Act (2021)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lotteries Commission that Bill No. 9, entitled *Act to Amend the Cannabis Control and Regulation Act (2021)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill No. 9, the *Act to Amend the Cannabis Control and Regulation Act (2021)*, at third reading.

As we discussed at second reading and in Committee of the Whole debate, the proposed amendment to the *Cannabis Control and Regulation Act* is the first step in the development of comprehensive regulations on e-commerce and home delivery. During the public engagement in 2017, a year before legalization, Yukoners were forward-thinking when it came to the opportunities that they wanted to see for cannabis in the territory. Approximately 58 percent of respondents said that they strongly or somewhat agreed that services such as online sales and home delivery should be allowed for cannabis, regardless of whether stores are privately or publicly operated, and 88 percent of respondents said that they strongly or somewhat agreed with a policy approach focused on developing legal and controlled access while displacing illegal and criminal activity.

We believe that the new proposed amendments help us to achieve the goals and opportunities that Yukoners are looking for, as well as to support our cannabis retailers.

I would like to thank all Members of the Legislative Assembly for their input on this amendment to the *Cannabis Control and Regulation Act*. Many of the topics discussed during Committee of the Whole were broader questions about the Yukon's cannabis framework, and I would like to touch on these during third reading today.

I will begin with cannabis pricing. We want to support retailers in tackling the illegal market, and examining pricing is one way to do this. The corporation reviewed cannabis pricing with licensees and reduced cost-of-service charges on products at the end of October. We switched a per-gram cost of service to a per-unit cost of service. For some products, this meant that the cost of service dropped from \$14 to as little as \$2.15. Cannabis flower categories over two grams now have a cost of service of \$2.15 per unit. Those under two grams have a cost of 50 cents per unit, and all other products, such as edibles, have a cost of service of 15 cents per unit. This change will assist licensees looking to set competitive prices and combat the illicit market.

The corporation also charges a 22-percent wholesale markup on all products purchased by licensed retailers. This

markup has not changed in the three years since legalization, and we are currently looking at whether the rate can be further reduced to help licensees. We are working closely with our retailers on this topic.

The second topic that I would like to address and that was touched on in Committee of the Whole is advertising. Licensees must comply with the federal *Cannabis Act*, which has detailed requirements relating to advertising products, sponsorships, and the sale of merchandise. The corporation is examining these federal restrictions closely to support licensees where possible. There are just a few instances where additional restrictions exist at the territorial level — for instance, loyalty programs. The majority of the requirements are really federal. However, the corporation continues to examine the small number of territorial-level restrictions to see if there are additional ways to help licensees.

It is important to know, at this point, that Health Canada runs a federal-provincial-territorial working group, which was discussed during Committee of the Whole, as part of its review of cannabis. The Yukon Liquor Corporation attends this federal-provincial-territorial working group and will continue participating in this important review as it restarts following the federal election. While the working group's discussions are confidential, the corporation can work with licensees to bring forward any specific concerns that they have about federal legislation.

There was also interest in our distribution system during Committee of the Whole. During the public engagement on legalization, 28 percent of respondents thought government-licensed, private distributors should oversee and manage cannabis distribution within the Yukon, 24 percent thought that cannabis producers should be allowed to sell directly to retail stores, 17 percent were in favour of government distribution to government-run stores, and 24 percent thought that retail operators should be required to purchase wholesale from a government supplier, which is the system that we now have.

The Yukon Liquor Corporation is the sole distributor for cannabis in the territory. While that arrangement does not differ from the highest ranked response in the public engagement, it puts the corporation in a position to support private retailers by arranging sourcing and supply, freight, and warehousing. The corporation works with private retailers to ensure that any challenges are met in a way that meets the retailers' needs. In many ways, the Yukon is in a unique position in terms of geography, population, and the small number of retailers that we have in comparison to southern jurisdictions.

One model of distribution that has been raised in the Legislative Assembly in the past is that of Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan is the only province that has fully privatized cannabis retail as well as its wholesale and distribution model. Many private retailers in Saskatchewan are owned by large publicly traded companies or chains for which privatized distribution works well. These large companies can secure supply contracts at much higher volumes and better product variety and pricing than small businesses. It is important to note that, in 2019, smaller independent retailers in Saskatchewan felt compelled to launch the Weed Pool cooperative to create

shared buying power and secure better pricing and product selection from producers.

During that time frame in the Yukon, the corporation has gone from having supply agreements with nine federally licensed suppliers to approximately 40. Licensees actively suggest suppliers for the corporation to sign on. The corporation works closely with private retailers and suppliers to ensure that appropriate supply is on hand. Private retailers have shared, during weekly calls, that supply has significantly improved, particularly during the past year. These joint efforts mean that we have a reliable supply chain with a variety of products available to licensees.

To summarize, we have a successful model that we can continue to build on through this amendment. Our retail sales continue to grow. In the 2020-21 fiscal year, cannabis sales through the corporation to licensees increased by over \$2.5 million from the 2019-20 fiscal year. Our licensees are doing a fantastic job in these turbulent times.

The Yukon Liquor Corporation continuously reviews new and different approaches to the sale and distribution of cannabis with both the protection of Yukoners and the interest of our retailers in mind. The corporation works closely with licensees in a supportive environment, likely one of the closest of all Canadian jurisdictions.

I would like to move on now to economic opportunities. When presented with possibilities for economic opportunities related to the cannabis industry during the 2017 public engagement, 84 percent of respondents supported locally grown cannabis and 72 percent supported retail opportunities. I am pleased to say that the corporation recently signed a supplier agreement with ArcticPharm, the Yukon's very first producer. We are looking forward to seeing their products on the shelves. In addition, a new cannabis retailer opened its doors in Watson Lake just two weeks ago. We now have six cannabis retail stores in the Yukon. These retailers employ more than 40 people. Together, they help us to ensure the supply of legal cannabis and reduce the illicit market.

While statistics on the illicit market share can be difficult to determine with accuracy, we do know that Canadians are switching to the legal market. According to the 2020 national cannabis survey run by Health Canada, approximately 69 percent of cannabis users reported choosing a legal source for at least some of the cannabis that they consumed. This figure is higher than just after legalization in 2019. We believe that this statistic is likely similar in the Yukon. Our sales continue to grow, and we are fortunate not to have some of the challenges that other jurisdictions have in this area, such as grey market storefronts. However, illegal online sales do exist in this territory. Now is the time to provide our retailers with online sales opportunities so that they can remain competitive and continue to seize the illicit market share. I believe that, through the proposed act amendment before you today, we are providing this important opportunity.

With this short amendment, a person performing functions in relation to e-commerce and delivery will now be able to possess cannabis provided to them by a licensee. The change prevents a person possessing cannabis for delivery purposes

from committing an offence when they possess the cannabis, having obtained it from the licensee rather than the Yukon Liquor Corporation.

Further details about the Yukon's new, private retail, e-commerce framework will be available once the regulations are finalized. A wide range of options for e-commerce and home delivery are under consideration as we develop the regulations. We are working to get legislation finalized as soon as possible.

Once again, I would like to thank the Members of the Legislative Assembly for their input on this amendment to the *Cannabis Control and Regulation Act*.

I want to thank the Yukon Liquor Corporation staff who continue to work on the legislation. I would also like to thank the Cannabis Licensing Board for its hard work and dedication. The board helps to ensure that the Yukon's cannabis industry is viable through its diligent review of cannabis retail applications.

Once we finalize the regulations, I am confident that the new legislation will take us forward by contributing to economic growth, while doing so in a socially responsible manner.

Mr. Dixon: We have spoken to this at second reading and in Committee, and I have said all that I wish to say about this bill at those stages. With that, I am pleased to note that we will be supporting this bill. We have been advocating for this for some time, and we look forward to seeing this bill pass.

Ms. Tredger: As noted, we have discussed this at second reading. That was a helpful discussion, which we appreciated. Thank you again to the officials in the department for making this happen. We look forward to supporting this bill.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I want to say a few things. First of all, I want to take a moment to thank the folks of the Yukon Liquor Corporation and, in particular, those people who helped in the first year when the government ran the government cannabis store. There were some great staff there.

They did a wonderful job talking to the public and helping to inform Yukoners who had questions and who were curious in coming into the government store. They did a really great job.

We said at that time, when we opened the store, that our intention was to do this as an interim step and that we would do this in a way to try to introduce cannabis into the Yukon — as it was being legalized for the first time across the country — and to make sure that the goals we had set out to protect the health and safety of Yukoners, including youth, and to displace the black market — in a stable and steady way. We also said at that time that our intention was to step back.

The Official Opposition at that time said: No, the government, once they start, would never get out of the business. I said that, no, we will, and we did. One year to the day from when the store first opened, it closed as a government store and we no longer had a brick and mortar store.

Just because this is just a moment when I get to do it, I would just like to say to those folks who worked at that store that I thought they did a tremendous job. There was a lot of hustling in the background with the corporation and with the staff there to get things up and running. Everybody worked super hard, and it was really well done.

I also would like to say that the fears that the opposition brought up — that there would not be a change and that we would not get out of the business of selling cannabis and it was not going to happen — well, that did happen. If this legislation passes here today at third reading, effectively what we will do is transfer over to the private sector the ability to do those online sales. Again, when the minister tabled the annual report several weeks ago, the percentage of online sales is a very small percent of the overall sales, but it is important that we provide this avenue for the private sector retailers.

I would also like to say that the private retailers here have done a tremendous job, and I appreciate that they have advocated and worked to try to move things forward. I'm excited to hear the minister announce here in the Legislature about ArcticPharm. It is great to hear that there will be cannabis growing here north of 60 — you know, probably not the last announcement that will come, but it is great to hear. I look forward to their part in this whole supply chain.

The private retail market here has some differences with larger stores and smaller stores with one chain. Those things all make a difference, and I think that it is one of the reasons why we continue to believe that the model that we have adopted on the wholesale side, being the corporation, is the right model. I know that the members opposite, the Official Opposition, have continued to talk about Saskatchewan as a model, but again, we will stand and note that, from the last numbers that I have, the amount of black market that we are displacing here is one and a half times — 50 percent — better in the Yukon compared to Saskatchewan.

So, hats off to the private retailers for the work that they are doing. I thank them for their advocacy, starting with me and continuing on with the current Minister responsible for the Liquor Corporation, to get in this amendment to the act. Again, when we brought this in, in 2018, the legislation was meant to be a first step to go from a period of time — decades, or over a century, I'm guessing — when cannabis was illegal to legalizing it. That was going to take a little bit of adjustment for us as a society. It has gone extremely well, and I thank all those involved for making this a very, very smooth transition, and I look forward to the success of the private industry here in the territory.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Again, I would just like to thank the members of the Assembly for their input. I think that it was a good exchange during Committee of the Whole — some areas, again, which I have touched on, that we will keep our eye on and that followed our responsibility and jurisdiction. I also

believe that, through that, we got a good sense to really engage at the working group table with other provincial and territorial members.

Even my mandate letter talks to a reduction in packaging and things such as that. We have a lot of things that we want to continue to work on at the national level that we think are important. Again, we are happy to be able to move this.

I want to commend my colleague. I had an opportunity to watch the commitments made — and then followed through on and executing them exactly as he stated that he would. I think that it has really led to a boon for the private sector.

I will just close by saying for folks that, whether it's in the liquor market or in the cannabis market, we want to always think about responsible use first. That is what we commit to, but also, I will let folks know that one of the very first phone calls that I received last week was from our president, Mr. Dennis Berry, who has been doing an exceptional job. It has been fantastic working with him. He was calling me because we had a bit of work to do with the flooding in British Columbia. Right away, we identified four tractor-trailer loads — four trailers — that had to be redirected through the US and then back up into Alberta. We always keep a large supply of product in place. Right now, I think that, based on the consumption trends that we've seen, we have about six weeks of supplies. People will be okay for their wine for their Christmas dinner and such. I just wanted to communicate to folks that we are tracking some of the disruption in British Columbia, and we are well-positioned to continue to deliver the service that we have been delivering and will continue to deliver.

With that, thank you to all of the policy folks who really do the heavy lifting when it comes to this work.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 17 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for third reading of Bill No. 9 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 9 has passed this House.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): Order, please. I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

Before we begin, the Chair will make a brief statement.

Deputy Chair's statement

Deputy Chair: As was noted by the Chair of Committee of the Whole on November 21, 2019, the primary purpose of having witnesses appear in the Committee is for the witnesses to answer members' questions. This purpose is also appropriately reflected in the wording of the order that the Committee adopted earlier this month for witnesses to appear from the Yukon Hospital Corporation. I will note that nowhere in the orders arising out of motions for witnesses to appear in Committee of the Whole do the orders provide for the minister to interject during the questioning of witnesses.

There is a very short amount of time that the Committee has to question witnesses and for the witnesses to answer members' questions — just two hours in total. It is the Chair's role to ensure that the Committee uses its time in the way that the Committee has directed. The order that the Committee adopted provides for witnesses, as opposed to ministers or any other members, to answer members' questions.

In keeping with the spirit and letter of the Committee's direction, the Chair is of the view that the people who should be responding to the questions asked by members of witnesses are the witnesses themselves.

The Chair will note that if a minister wishes to respond to a question that a member has posed to witnesses, there are a number of avenues available to ministers to provide information to the Assembly. One of these avenues is filing a legislative return at a later time. A second avenue is writing a follow-up letter to the member.

In addition, if the witness is of the opinion that a question received is not one that is within the scope of their area or program, then the witness has the ability to indicate this in their response to the question. In general terms, members tend not to be experts in witnesses' full scopes of practice, which is why witnesses are brought before the Committee. Questions outside

the witnesses' scope do not need to be answered by either the witness or by a minister rising during the questioning of witnesses. Once a question has been noted by a witness to be outside of their ambit, the questioner should move on and/or indicate that they — that is, the member — will follow up with the minister responsible at a later date.

Finally, members only have a brief opportunity to question witnesses. Conversely, greater opportunities exist for the members to ask questions of the ministers. These opportunities include tabling written questions, asking oral questions during Question Period, and questioning a minister during budget debates. Ministers also have the ability to respond to questions posed during those opportunities.

All members should avail themselves of these opportunities and leave specific witness questions to be asked of witnesses and answered by witnesses during the witnesses' appearances.

The Chair would like to thank the members for their attention.

Motion re appearance of witnesses Committee of the Whole Motion No. 3

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, November 23, 2021, Lesley Brown, president and vice-chancellor of Yukon University, and David Morrison, chair of the Yukon University Board of Governors, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions relating to Yukon University.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, November 23, 2021, Lesley Brown, president and vice-chancellor of Yukon University, and David Morrison, chair of the Yukon University Board of Governors, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions relating to Yukon University.

Committee of the Whole Motion No.3 agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 10, entitled *Act to Amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021)*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 10 minutes.

Recess

Deputy Chair: Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 10: Act to Amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021)

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 10, entitled *Act to Amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021)*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: With respect to Bill No. 10, I appreciate the opportunity to stand. I would like to welcome and introduce to the Legislative Assembly members Tyler Plaunt and Rebecca Veinott, both with the Department of Justice. One works on policy and the other is in charge of our legislative counsel office. I welcome them and thank them for their assistance here today.

I do have some remarks with respect to the details of Bill No. 10. In my earlier remarks upon second reading, I reviewed the legislative changes that we are proposing to the *Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act*. Today I am really pleased to present the bill in some more depth, which I hope will assist the members of this Legislative Assembly.

As I begin, I would like to again remind members that the process for the Judicial Compensation Commission is set out in the *Territorial Court Act*, whereby a commission is struck every three years, and their job — the members of the Judicial Compensation Commission — is to review and negotiate salaries and benefits for judges, for deputy judges, and for Justices of the Peace.

The process set out by the commission is meant to help maintain the proper constitutional balance between judicial independence and the role of the Legislature in deciding judicial remuneration. The final report of the 2016 Judicial Compensation Commission and its recommendations were approved in 2019. As a result of accepted recommendations from the report, amendments to the *Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act* are necessary. These amendments will give life to the recommendations that were made by that Judicial Compensation Commission. As members may recall, the *Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act* includes three schedules that articulate the provisions of: (1) the judiciary registered pension plan; (2) the judiciary retirement compensation arrangement; and (3) the supplementary judicial pension plan.

I would like to note that, while the recommendations of the 2016 Judicial Compensation Commission are directed mainly at Schedule No. 3 and the supplemental judicial pension plan provisions, some amendments are proposed to Schedule No. 1, and those are done in order to harmonize the language across the act where appropriate.

Additionally, I want to let members know that, as a courtesy and in the spirit of the Judicial Compensation Commission, the Department of Justice provided the judiciary opportunities to review the language of the proposed amendments on several occasions. I am assuming that this will help members of this Legislature to adopt the amendments that are proposed here, understanding that the judiciary has reviewed them a number of times and taken into account how they will affect their own compensation.

The proposed amendments in this bill can be separated into three components. The first major component of the proposed amendments are changes in clarifying and expanding the scheme of how reductions are applied to pension benefit amounts in the event that a member elects to commence receipt of their pension benefits prior to their earliest unreduced retirement date. In order to satisfy recommendation 1 from those recommendations from the Judicial Compensation Commission, subsection 9(1) of the act is amended to remove the notion of an actuarial reduction and instead provide for a 0.25 percent per month reduction. This subsection also amends the criteria of a normal pension commencement date by changing the continuous service requirement in subsection 9(1)(b) from 20 years to 30 years and adding subsection 9(1)(c), which captures the age-plus-service time scenario, where the member's age plus their years of continuous service is equal to 80 years. That is the first major proposed change.

Moving on, the second major component of the proposed amendment clarifies that a five-year guarantee applies to all pensions payable, including for joint and survivor pensions for a judge with a spouse. This amendment makes certain that Schedule 3 is consistent with the provisions in Schedule 1 by ensuring that a spouse or a common-law partner will continue to receive pension amounts under both the registered and supplemental pension plans for a full five-year period, even in the event that the member judge dies prior to the end of that period.

The new subsection 10(2.01)(b) also ensures that those pension amounts will continue to be paid to the spouse or common-law partner's beneficiaries should the spouse or partner die prior to the end of that same five-year period.

The last component seeks to clarify that child benefits, in terms of pension amounts, are payable under both the registered and supplemental pension plans by codifying the schedule for disbursement of pension amounts to judges' children, and that's in Schedule 3.

The amendments seek to harmonize the provisions of Schedule 3 with similar provisions in Schedule 1 by codifying the disbursement scheme under the scenarios where a member's children are to receive pension amounts in addition to a member's common-law partner or spouse and where a member's children are to receive pension amounts and there is no spouse or common-law partner who is receiving pension amounts.

Other amendments to section 10 of Schedule 3 are made as a consequence to the amendments that I have just summarized and ensure that a judge's children are captured under the disbursement scheme for pension amounts under the supplementary pension plan.

It's also worth mentioning that the amendments to Schedule 1, section 18, and to Schedule 1, section 22, are made to promote consistency between the language of Schedule 1 and Schedule 3. These amendments are all designed to clarify the rules in the three instances that have become part of the recommendations from the Judicial Compensation Commission from 2019, which began in 2016.

Deputy Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to further explain these amendments and the details of them. I look forward to discussion and questions, if there are some, from my colleagues.

Just before I end my comments, I should note that there were some questions during a briefing regarding Bill No. 10. One of the questions asked was whether the financial implications or considerations of these amendments have been incorporated as part of the budget, either in the mains or the supplemental. I think that this is a good question. I can confirm that the judicial salary and benefit considerations resulting from the proposed amendments in Bill No. 10 were, in fact, realized and reflected in the 2019-20 mains budget.

The Department of Justice has confirmed with the Public Service Commission that the financial considerations for child benefits stemming from the proposed amendments that are proposed here in Bill No. 10 were accepted, along with the changes to the judicial remuneration, back in 2019, and those have been accounted for.

Although it's quite technical, we are really taking the opportunity here to give life to the recommendations that came from that commission and to clarify those recommendations in the act that is being amended here. I can note that the *Act to Amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021)* is to clarify some language and lastly to make sure that Schedule 1 and Schedule 3 under those provisions are aligned.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 10, entitled *Act to Amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021)*?

Seeing none, we will proceed to clause-by-clause debate.

Mr. Cathers: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 10, entitled *Act to Amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021)*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses and the title of Bill No. 10 read and agreed to

Deputy Chair: The Member for Lake Laberge has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 10, entitled *Act to Amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021)*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 1 to 10 deemed read and agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 10, entitled *Act to Amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021)*, without amendment.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale South that the Chair report Bill No. 10, entitled *Act to Amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021)*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Deputy Chair: Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 3 adopted earlier today, Committee of the Whole will receive witnesses from Yukon University at 3:30 p.m.

Would members like to recess until 3:30 p.m.?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Committee will recess for 30 minutes.

Recess

Chair (Ms. Blake): Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Appearance of witnesses

Chair: Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 3 adopted on this day, Committee of the Whole will now receive witnesses from Yukon University.

I would ask all members to remember to refer their remarks through the Chair when addressing the witnesses. I would also ask that the witnesses refer their answers through the Chair when they are responding to the members of the Committee.

The Member for Mountainview, I believe that you will introduce the witnesses.

Witnesses introduced

Hon. Ms. McLean: The witnesses appearing before Committee of the Whole are Dr. Lesley Brown, president and vice-chancellor for Yukon University, and David Morrison, chair of the Yukon University Board of Governors. I would also like to acknowledge Lacia Kinnear, the associate vice-president of governance and external, who is observing in the gallery today. I would like to thank the witnesses for coming to the Legislative Assembly and I look forward to the discussion.

Chair: Would the witnesses like to make brief opening remarks?

Mr. Morrison: Thank you, Madam Chair, Hon. Minister McLean, and Members of the Legislative Assembly, for the opportunity to speak with you today. I would like to acknowledge that we are present on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

I am pleased to appear before you today with our new president and vice-chancellor, Dr. Lesley Brown. I would like to take a few minutes for those of you who haven't had an opportunity to meet Dr. Brown to introduce her to you at this time. Prior to coming to Yukon University, Dr. Brown served as provost and vice-president academic at Mount Royal University in Calgary. In this role, she oversaw all facets of educational programming and research at Mount Royal, which transitioned into a university in 2009. Prior to this, Dr. Brown served at the University of Lethbridge as a faculty member and administrator, including interim vice-president of research, associate vice-president of research, and vice-provost of academics.

Dr. Brown holds a PhD in kinesiology from the University of Waterloo, a master of human kinetics in biomechanics from the University of Windsor, and a bachelor of physical education from McMaster University. She has also completed a three-year post-doctoral research fellowship at the University of Oregon. Dr. Brown has proven to be a committed, energetic, and inspired leader. We are very happy to welcome Dr. Brown, who has only been here a few months, to lead our faculty, staff, and students at the university.

I won't go into a lot of the academic accomplishments from the university over the past year, but I would like to talk about a few. Students from the Yukon, NWT, BC, Alberta, and beyond — including international students — are choosing Yukon University. Last year, while we expected a drop due to COVID and initial fall enrolment was down, by the summer, credit program enrolment had, in fact, increased beyond the previous pandemic year by 36 students, for a total of 1,285 students in total. Despite the ongoing pandemic, this current fall semester, we have 964 students enrolled in credit programs, the highest fall enrolment in five years. I don't want to mix those numbers up. One was a full year and one is just the fall enrolment number.

Our research and innovation programs moved from strength to strength. The northern innovation program, which was renewed last year with a further \$2 million in funding, and in collaboration with the Government of Yukon and the University of Alberta, we created a Two-Eyed Seeing research program and established Daqualama Jocelyn Joe-Strack as the research chair in indigenous knowledge.

As well, five Yukon businesses are currently being supported by the Incubate North program, kickstarted by a \$400,000 donation from TD bank.

In closing, I would like to just say a few words about the tremendous challenge that the faculty, staff, and students at Yukon University have faced, as many of us have, during the last year. Our faculty, staff, and the administration have worked tirelessly to, first of all, deliver our programs online and then, now, switch back to face-to-face classroom delivery. Their work has been exceptional. I, for one, am very thankful for all of their efforts during the very difficult time.

Thank you, Madam Chair. We look forward to the questions.

Mr. Kent: I would like to thank the witnesses for appearing here today to answer questions with respect to Yukon University. I would also offer congratulations to Dr. Brown for assuming her new position with the university, and we look forward to seeing what exciting aspects she brings to the university with her experience — the experience mentioned by the chair, coming from Mount Royal, and other experience that she has. So, welcome and congratulations on the new position.

The first set of questions is with respect to that new position. Perhaps, Madam Chair, I will direct them toward Mr. Morrison, the chair of the university. I am just curious if he is able to provide for us the recruitment costs for the new president, as well — if the numbers exist now — as the final severance costs for the individual who served in that president

role for a very short period of time and then, I believe, moved back to Ontario.

Mr. Morrison: Madam Chair, I don't have exact numbers. I would not say that there was not a severance package for the previous president, but the only financial payout to the previous president was the three-month notice that he provided under his contract. There were no other dollars provided to him as part of a severance of any kind.

I can find the numbers for you and provide it — for the relocation costs — but essentially they are just the moving costs for moving Dr. Brown and her belongings to the Yukon, but I will get the number, Madam Chair.

Mr. Kent: Also included in that, could the chair of the university also indicate whether or not there was an HR firm or, for lack of a better term, a headhunting firm hired to recruit the new president? It would be great if he could respond on whether there was a contract in place for that.

Mr. Morrison: There was indeed a search firm hired. As it turned out, the search firm was hired initially to recruit the previous president. Under the terms of the contract, because that president didn't stay the predetermined length of time, the firm was required to undertake the second search gratis.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that response.

I did want to move into some questions around human resources at the university. A news release was put out last week by the university and subsequently updated with respect to vaccination requirements for employees and students. I think, initially, what the news release said was that students in communities would not be required to be fully vaccinated, and then that was again updated on November 18. I am curious if the witness can explain why that change was made and if there was advice provided to make that change either from the board to the operational side of the university, or was it just a decision made by senior officials at the university?

Ms. Brown: The member is correct. There was a decision initially that was overturned. That decision was overturned based on feedback from members of the community. Now students in the communities will be required to be vaccinated.

Mr. Kent: I have some questions with respect to how the vaccine mandate will affect staff and contract staff.

In the annual report it says that, as of March 31, fiscal year end in 2021, there were 322 regular or term staff and 274 casual, contract, and student staff. So, do either of the witnesses have any idea how many of those individuals will be affected — will perhaps not have vaccines? Is there any indication at this time how many of those employees may be affected? I'm curious if it will be the same sort of situation that the Yukon government has found themselves in where they are putting those employees on leave without pay.

Ms. Brown: At this point, we don't have information regarding the vaccination rates of our employees or our students, but we can project based on national averages and expectations of medical exemption from national averages. An October 5 statement from the Ontario chief medical officer of health indicated one to five people out of 100,000 should qualify for a medical exemption, so if we were to translate those

numbers to the employee and student population at Yukon University, we anticipate that it could affect up to two permanent employees, perm/term employees, and five of our students.

In addressing the second part of the member's question, we have not released details at this point in time regarding the outcomes of non-compliance with the vaccine mandate, but we will be following the precedent set by the Yukon government.

Mr. Kent: I believe that the witness mentioned that the Ontario numbers are that one to five per 100,000 will have medical or some sort of an exemption. Do the witnesses have any idea how many employees at the university may either be vaccine hesitant or have chosen not to get a vaccine — how many individuals that may affect on the faculty at the university?

Ms. Brown: We do not have precise data on the number of individuals at the university who may be vaccine hesitant. Again, we would turn to national data and translate to infer an expectation. Unfortunately, I don't have that data with me at this time, but I would be pleased to bring it forward.

Mr. Kent: So, it's my understanding from questioning ministers earlier on in Committee debate that the Government of Yukon is putting forward an attestation process, obviously aimed at November 30, which is the date that they set for individuals to have their first vaccine. It looks like, from the updated news release, that for the university, the first dose needs to be held by December 10, 2021, the second dose by February 4, 2022, and then the vaccine to take full effect by February 18. For the sake of argument, it's about 10 days behind or so from where the Yukon government is. Will the college be implementing an attestation process, like the Yukon government has, to identify which of their employees are indeed fully vaccinated or are planning to get their first vaccine dose by December 10?

Ms. Brown: In response to the member's question, we will again be following the precedent set forward by the Yukon government and following the attestation process in principle.

There was a mention of some offset in dates, and I would like to bring it to the attention of the Assembly that our guiding principle here is to ensure the student outcomes and graduation rates. The offset of dates reflects timing that would best serve students, helping them to complete their courses and examinations.

Mr. Kent: I thank the witness for that response. It's obviously important to ensure that student success is one of those guiding principles, and we are appreciative of that. I believe that, for students, the requirements will not come into effect until this current semester is over. I'm curious if the witnesses have any idea how many students are expected to perhaps not return for the second semester as a result of the vaccine mandate that is being implemented.

Ms. Brown: Thank you for the question. The member is correct, and I appreciate the correction. This comes into effect for students on January 4. With respect to an expectation of the number of students who won't return because of this requirement, it is very difficult to say. I am unable to answer that.

Mr. Kent: We will look forward to sometime in the first week of the new year — getting a sense of where student enrolment numbers are at compared to the fall. I am sure that the witnesses will have a better idea then, so we can follow up with the minister in the spring on that.

Again, with respect to employees at the university, December 10 is the first date, so I am assuming that, shortly after then, they will have an idea of how many of the faculty or how many of the employees of the university, contractors, and others are affected. We will look forward to perhaps following up with the minister via a letter on those numbers as well after that December 10 date.

In the news release as well, it says — toward the bottom — that this year, 60 percent of credit classes are in person and 40 percent are online and that a significant number of continuing education classes are in person at the main campus. For unvaccinated students who wish to enrol in the second semester, are they able to continue with distance learning or online learning, even though they don't meet the vaccination requirements that the university is putting forward?

Ms. Brown: The expectation is that all students, employees, faculty, and staff at Yukon University will seek double vaccination. In response to your question, I would say that, despite the fact that there are online courses available to be taken, students will also be required to seek double vaccination.

Mr. Kent: I thank the witness for that clarification. Perhaps we will follow up with the minister on that as well. You have probably already answered this question, but I am going to ask it anyway. I am assuming that, in order to be in student residence, you will have to be double vaccinated or show the intention to get double vaccinated.

Again, I know that perhaps the witnesses won't have this data or information with them, but I will be curious how many students will no longer be eligible for student residence based on their vaccination status — perhaps I can get the witnesses to give an indication of following up with those numbers when they become available.

Ms. Brown: Thank you for the question. If I understand the question correctly, we have 133 students currently in campus housing. Again, we don't have a full idea of how many of those students may be vaccine hesitant. Again, we would turn to national data to provide some inference. At this point, all students will be expected to be double vaccinated to continue to stay in residence.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate the response from the witnesses.

I wanted to move on to the strategic planning. The 2016-21 strategic plan is up for renewal. When I went through the annual report and the chair's message, it did say that the 2021-26 strategic plan is due this fall, but when visiting the website this morning, it now says that this work will not be completed until 2022. I am hoping for a better indication of when in 2022 we can expect that next five-year strategic plan for the university, and if the witnesses can give us any sense of what the cause was for the delays in preparing it to be tabled this fall.

Mr. Morrison: The strategic planning process has been ongoing for a year. It is in very good shape. We are coming

down to the finish line. When we brought Dr. Brown on board, we took a decision at the board level to slow the development down a bit so that Dr. Brown could have some participation and influence in the plan, given that, under her leadership, she will have to implement the plan.

While, yes, we were looking at the fall, now, given that all goes well and we think everything is on track, we will take the plan to a board meeting in January. If the board approves, we will be prepared to provide that publicly shortly after that.

Mr. Kent: I will look forward to seeing that. As the witness said, the planning process has been going on for a while. I believe that it was earlier this year that an online survey was conducted. I am curious if the results of that online survey are published anywhere. I couldn't find them on the website this morning, if they are available there — if the results are available or if the witnesses can make those available in some sort of a "what we heard" document with respect to that survey.

Mr. Morrison: Sure. The plan is an iterative process, so those results were pretty early on. We don't have them with us, and we are not averse to making those available, but they would be very early in the process. We have done a number of engagements with stakeholders within and outside of the university during the process, and hopefully, that is what you will see when it all comes together, but we are happy to make it available.

Mr. Kent: We would look forward to just getting a sense for what the online survey results were.

I am going to jump around here a little bit now. I wanted to ask about the land use plan for the main campus here in Whitehorse. It was in 2015 that the land use plan was done for the entire 97-hectare land reserve. On the website, it mentions that the Yukon College Board of Governors has begun the task of working with the many stakeholders to source funding and planning approvals, allowing us to begin the incremental implementation of this master plan.

Has any of that implementation started at this point, or is the university still developing that preliminary list of who to engage with respect to funding and planning approvals?

Mr. Morrison: Unfortunately, we have not advanced that and I think that basically the events of COVID have turned our attention to many, many other things and that has not been on the board's agenda for the last year and a half.

Mr. Kent: Can the witness give us any indication on when that work might be resurrected, with respect to the land use plan?

Mr. Morrison: I think once we have our new strategic plan in place — which would be, as I said, early next year — in conjunction with the priorities established under that plan and also in conjunction with the business plans that will be developed by the executive team, we'll look at where we can build that work into our new schedule.

Mr. Kent: I wanted to ask a few questions about the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining and the role of the governing council there. Obviously, it's an industry-chaired council that provides direction to CNIM. I'm curious — the website says that the council meets quarterly to review plans and set budgets and priorities. Do the witnesses have any

indication when the last meeting took place and what kind of plans and priorities came out of those meetings?

Mr. Morrison: I don't have those at my fingertips, but I'm happy to provide the information.

Mr. Kent: I know that a number of years ago, there were some good synergies developed with the universities in Alaska with respect to training partnerships for CNIM. Obviously, COVID has thrown a wrench into any of those cross-border exchanges, but are there plans being considered to resurrect that? I know some of the Yukon individuals were trained near Delta Junction in Alaska, and I believe the CNIM simulators were over there at that time. So, I guess a couple questions: Are those simulators back at the main campus here of Yukon University? Is there consideration being given to resurrecting those partnerships with Alaska?

Ms. Brown: Thank you for the question. The mine simulators, as the member refers to, are located in Delta Junction. It was part of the equipment and infrastructure associated with the partnership program with the University of Alaska. That is correct; the border closures during COVID prevented our students from accessing the equipment and subsequently the infrastructure for training.

Despite that, the University of Alaska was able to continue training the students using the mine simulators. As an aside, we are hopeful that the tremendous draw of the beauty of the territory will attract those students to come over to work here in the Yukon, so we are pleased that they will continue to be trained. At this point, we are just considering next steps and moving into some conversations about how we are going to perhaps resurrect this or what the next steps will be once borders officially open and our students can access those simulators.

Mr. Kent: I am going to move on to some of the capital projects at the university. I am interested if the witnesses can give us an update on the science building. Where is that in the procurement process? The last time the witnesses were here, we talked about that as well. Is there any update on the budget and funding for it? I know that the Government of Canada made mention of it in a budget speech. I don't think it was this spring; perhaps it was last year. I am curious where that funding is at and if there are any preliminary cost estimates done for the science building here at the Whitehorse campus.

Ms. Brown: The member is correct. We have embarked on the exciting process of building a new science building. This building will be one of a kind. It will be unique in the fact that it will be built on the predicated foundation of blending western knowledge with indigenous knowledge and therefore become the envy of the rest of Canada.

We, of course, experienced the pandemic, which absolutely ground to a halt a great many construction projects, the science building being one of them. Since arriving at Yukon University, I have been working with the executive team to revitalize the project and to see where we are now. The member is correct: We were fortunate to receive a \$26-million investment from CIRNAC — from the federal government — which we will use to leverage some further resources to meet

the rising costs associated with building a building in a post-pandemic environment.

We are seeing an increase in cost in current market conditions; we are seeing cost escalation for equipment and also for construction materials. We are also considering a commitment to a net-zero build, and we are exploring that, which of course builds in some extra costs. At this point in time, we are working toward making some sort of a summary of what the building may cost right now so that we can uphold the commitment to build a building that is going to be a great draw for the territory and for the rest of Canada.

Mr. Kent: So, \$26 million is the commitment from the Government of Canada. Can the witnesses give us an indication of when they might be in a position to have some of the preliminary cost estimates done so we know what the potential ask is of other partners, such as the Government of Yukon?

Mr. Morrison: I think probably closer to the new year and perhaps the spring. We have a lot of work to do yet on how, as Dr. Brown said, COVID-19 and cost increases have affected the project and whether we can scale it down or what we have to do. That information has to get in front of our board, and the board has to make a decision, so I would say, hopefully early in the new year.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that. I am also curious — I know that the university, and the college before it, struggled with housing for students. I know that the president mentioned earlier the number of students who are currently in student housing.

Are there any preliminary plans or discussions with respect to adding additional student housing on campus, or perhaps off-campus, whatever the case may be? I know there was some work — we talked about it last year — done with a private sector partnership that I don't believe was continued, but again, I am curious what the plans are to increase the student housing capacity at the university.

Ms. Brown: In follow-up to my previous comments, we currently have 133 students living in campus housing. I can't emphasize enough the importance of exceptional campus housing to a student's post-secondary experience. Because of that, as we look to the future, we have plans to increase our campus housing over probably the next 10 years or so. We will be looking at all possible ways to do that. Most likely, it will be in a partnership model, but regardless of the method to achieve an increase in student housing, we are hopeful that we will be able to provide more spots for students so that they can each achieve a true sense of belonging and affinity to our institution.

Mr. Kent: We will look to revisit that student housing discussion with the witnesses, or the minister, at the appropriate time. I believe she mentioned that there is a 10-year time horizon that they are looking at to increase the supply of student housing. We will be excited to find out some of those plans.

When we were provided with the five-year capital plan for the Department of Education for the Yukon University transition — in this current fiscal year, for the Yukon government, it is \$500,000. We are in the main estimates, and that is the forecast. Then we have \$500,000 a year going out for the next three fiscal years, so I am curious what the plans are

for that \$500,000. I think last year, a lot of that money was spent on exterior signage for the university and, I'm assuming, interior signage as well. I am curious what the plans are to spend the capital allotment from the Department of Education that appears in their five-year capital plan.

Mr. Morrison: I will maybe just get a little bit of clarification on the question. Is this the transition dollars or — capital dollars; okay.

Mr. Kent: When we received our briefing on the Department of Education on October 18, 2021, for the supplementary budget, it says that the program is “Yukon University” and the capital project is “Yukon University transition”, and then there is \$500,000 in the mains and the forecast, and then that number is carried out for 2022-23, 2023-24, and 2024-25. I am just curious what plans the university has to spend those dollars.

Mr. Morrison: I thank the member for that. I don't have that detail at my fingertips, but again, we are happy to provide it.

Mr. Kent: Yes, we look forward to some information from the university on the plans for that capital line item, and any details that the witnesses can share for those subsequent years would also be appreciated.

I wanted to ask a few questions with respect to the Canada Winter Games bid for 2027. Has the university been engaged in any discussions on what their role may be, as far as hosting the games? I know that, when the games were hosted here in 2007, the two facilities were built up there. One is now a seniors residence, and I believe that the other one is a student residence and houses some of the research centre staff. Have there been any initial discussions with partners as to what the role for the university would be with respect to hosting the Canada Winter Games in 2027?

Mr. Morrison: Early days yet in the Canada Winter Games process. The bid committee is meeting regularly. We are involved in those discussions, as a member of one of the committees that the bid committee has put together. There haven't been any meetings with partners. It is a matter, at the moment, of looking at possible options for the Canada Winter Games bid and whether or not further discussion with perhaps potential partners might occur at a later date, but that is what we are aware of to date.

Mr. Kent: Again, that is another one of those things that we will look forward to getting additional information on as the bid progresses and then hopefully the award and then whatever plans there are for the university campus here in Whitehorse and potential additions to the infrastructure that is on campus.

I do have just a couple of questions with respect to the NorthLight campus. I'm curious if the witnesses can give us a sense of what course offerings, or what work, is being done at the NorthLight campus, from a researcher, as I mentioned, a course offering standpoint, what the staffing complement is there, and if there is any information with respect to operational costs, that would be helpful as well.

Ms. Brown: Thank you for the question. Madam Chair, we were just a bit confused, because we don't regard the NorthLight centre as a separate campus. It is part of the

Ayamdigut Campus. That's the location where we offer our innovation entrepreneurship presence. Currently, we are supporting two programs: There is the Elevate program, which is a partnership with Yukon Tourism, and we also have IncubateNorth.

Overall, I can give you a snapshot of some of the contributions of the I&E presence into the Whitehorse community. We have served 179 innovators and entrepreneurs, and these are community members, not necessarily students — although some might be. We have funded over 100 projects. We have supported the development of 23 new prototypes. From that, 10 new products and services were brought to market, bringing some economic impact into the community.

Mr. Kent: With apologies to the witnesses, when I was researching that question, it was on page 7 of your annual report, and it refers to it as Yukon U's NorthLight campus in the second bullet. Apologies to the witnesses for not interpreting that it is part of the main campus.

I guess the other question is then — and sorry if the witness answered this — but are there any operational costs? I'm assuming that the space is leased either from the landlord or from the non-profit that operates that centre. Are there some operational costs that the witnesses are able to share?

Ms. Brown: I don't have the operational costs for the NorthLight campus at my fingertips. I will be happy to follow up and provide that for the member.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that, and I look forward to getting that information from the witnesses.

During the spring territorial election, the governing party made a commitment to work with Yukon University to investigate the feasibility of a varsity sports program. This work appears in the mandate letter for the Minister of Education. It's going to be led by the Department of Education with support from the Department of Economic Development, so I am curious if there have been any discussions as to what that varsity sports program might look like, at this point, and if there are any preliminary cost estimates for putting that into place, with the feasibility work that is underway.

Ms. Brown: At this point, the member is correct that we are in the very, very early stages of exploring the feasibility of providing varsity sports at Yukon University. I can't overemphasize enough the contribution that sports and varsity sports bring to a university, particularly to student life, as well as being a terrific source of community pride for the community in which a university or college resides. We are very much looking forward the outcome of that feasibility study, but it's still early for me to provide a definitive comment on cost.

Mr. Kent: Can the witnesses give us an indication of when that feasibility study may be completed? Is there a rough guess as to when it may be completed?

Ms. Brown: The timeline for the feasibility study would be beyond the capacity of our control. At this point, we are just looking at an RFP.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that and, again, we will look forward to some more information on that, as time progresses, with respect to that varsity sports program.

Obviously, the transition from a college to a university was extremely exciting. It took a number of years; it was very well-planned and well-executed. One of the questions that I am interested in is if the witnesses can provide us with any sort of a snapshot on what the oncoming years will bring, as far as additional degree offerings at Yukon University. Is there any indication, at this point, on what some of those might be or when we may find out about what some of those might be?

Ms. Brown: As we look to the future of Yukon University, we have to consider the priorities that are set forth in the upcoming strategic plan. I won't spoil the punchline at this point in time, but I will share that one of those priorities is a commitment to the north, and another one of those priorities is a commitment to the hybrid nature of Yukon University.

With that in mind, as we consider the potential for new program offerings, I would say that, first and foremost, there will be a commitment to upholding the comprehensiveness that is inherent within a hybrid university, meaning that we will provide a commitment to ensuring the relevance and the challenge, I suppose, of courses within our skilled trades, diplomas, and certificates as equally as we will to the development of new diplomas and new degrees. With a priority to building a focus in the north, I would expect that some of those program offerings will reflect the unique needs and the unique challenges in the north.

At this point, first and foremost, we're considering a bachelor of northern studies, which has been underway for a little bit of time. We are still looking at that, and I will share with the Assembly that the development of a new academic program is a very long process and an arduous process in and of itself, taking anywhere between a year to two and a half years.

Beyond that, it will require some conversations within the university, as well as conversations outside of the university, so that we can ensure that our decisions are informed by stakeholders across the territory.

Mr. Kent: I want to talk specifically about a couple of the programs offered at the university. The first one that I want to ask about was the licensed practical nurse program — LPN.

Do the witnesses have any enrolment figures for that program? Is it trending up? Is it trending down? Obviously, it's one of those programs, I believe, where there would be a significant number of employment opportunities for anyone who graduates from that program. I am just curious where the trends are with respect to the LPN program at the university.

Ms. Brown: The enrolment trends for the licensed practical nursing program are trending up. In 2019, we had an intake of 28. That dropped down to 25 in 2020 — a COVID-related decline — but we are back up to 30 students for the fall of 2021. It's a very resource-intensive program. We serve 30 students through two cohorts that are offered concurrently.

Mr. Kent: Another one of the program offerings that I am curious about is with respect to early childhood educators. Can the witnesses give a sense of what the numbers are looking like there? Obviously, there was a significant investment made by the federal government as far as our early learning and

childcare centres. I am curious about what kind of demand there is for that program at the university.

Ms. Brown: I apologize. I don't have information on early childhood with me at this point in time, but I definitely will bring it forward.

Mr. Kent: I just want to jump back to the LPN program, the licensed practical nurse program. The witness mentioned two cohorts. Are those annual intakes for that program, or are the intakes for the LPN program at the university on some other schedule?

Ms. Brown: In response to the member's question, yes, those are annual intakes.

Mr. Kent: When I'm looking at the transfer payments specific to some of these program areas done by the Department of Education, outside of the operational funding — in 2019-20, the actual was about \$23.6 million. The estimated for this fiscal year is \$24 million. But then the other programs here — the youth exploring trades, the LPN program, Yukon Research Centre, Northern Institute of Social Justice, and the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining — have all been steady at the same amount: youth exploring trades, \$75,000; LPN, \$491,000; Yukon Research Centre, \$1.386 million; Northern Institute of Social Justice, \$450,000; and then the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining, \$1.2 million.

I'm curious if there are funding agreements that are entered into that don't have escalators — or why these numbers would be stagnant across the board. If the witnesses can't answer, perhaps that's a question that I can follow up with the minister on.

Ms. Brown: The member is correct on the transfer agreements. I will emphasize, however, that the university is committed to ensuring an effective expenditure of funding that we are provided. In that assurance, we are always reviewing our current offerings to ensure that they respond to the needs of the community and of society and also the needs of our learners.

Mr. Kent: In the most recent annual report on page 17, under Revenues, it says that contributions — the core funding from Government of Yukon is at 56 percent of the overall revenues for the university. I'm curious if the witnesses can let us know if this number is trending up or trending down as a percentage of the overall revenues for the university.

Ms. Brown: I can report that, in 2019-20, we had a contribution of \$27 million — I'm sorry, I can't translate that in my head — of an annual budget of \$48.4 million.

In 2021, we also had a contribution of \$21.8 million out of \$39.4 million — but I do want to indicate that it is a stub year, a nine-month fiscal year — and in 2021-22, it is \$30.5 million out of \$46.8 million, which, you have identified, in 2021 is 56 percent.

Mr. Kent: I just have one more question for the witnesses before I turn it over to my colleague, the Member for Copperbelt North, and then to the Leader of the New Democratic Party. It is with respect to international student enrolment.

In the fall of 2020, according to the annual report, there was a total of 124 international students enrolled. In the previous fall of 2019, there were 144 international students enrolled.

Obviously, COVID would have had a major impact on this, but I'm curious if the witnesses have the fall of 2021 enrolment numbers for international students.

Ms. Brown: Thank you for the question, Madam Chair. In fall 2021, Yukon University accepted 126 international students, representing 13 percent of the credit student enrolment.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you to the witnesses. I will be brief. I know that our time is short. I just wanted to build on some of the questions that my colleague had asked.

With regard to the LPN program, the witness indicated some of the numbers for intake. I was also interested in getting an understanding of the demand. Is there a wait-list? Is there more demand than the program can handle? If so, what does that demand look like, and could the program handle additional resources to accommodate additional intake?

Ms. Brown: Unfortunately, I don't have data on demands, nor do I have data on yield rates, but when we assess the size of a program and consider how many students we can serve, we consider many factors. One of those is community need. In the case of the practical nursing program, we are seeing that community need would reflect the demographics of the city or the demographics of the region. It is something that we are constantly considering and constantly ensuring.

The other thing that we would also need to look at is our capacity to teach those students and ensure that they have an exceptional student experience, so there are many, many factors that go in as we identify the cohort size for any program.

Going forward, this is absolutely something that we will be looking at to ensure that Yukon University is best serving the needs of the community within its means.

Mr. Dixon: Obviously, my question comes in the context of a fairly strong demand for medical practitioners, not just in the Yukon but in the country, and so my question was in relation to that. I appreciate the witness' comments about how they view those.

I would ask a very similar question about the early learning and childcare program. The witness did indicate that she didn't have the numbers at the tip of her fingers, which I appreciate. We can circle back with that. But is she able to give us a sense of the similar trends with the early learning and childcare program? Has there been significant demand? I assume that there has. Can she give us an indication of what that looks like — whether or not there is a fairly large wait-list or not for that program — and what they are doing to expand the capacity of that program?

Ms. Brown: Thank you for the question. Again, I don't have the specific numbers on early childhood education, but I think that this program in particular is one that also responds to demographic trends. It also responds to needs of the community.

Recently, the federal government announced an investment in early childhood education, and Yukon University will be keen to see how we can move forward in ensuring that we can serve the needs of the territory. I don't think that we have to think too far beyond our current state of pandemic to

realize the importance of education for our youth, and we are very excited to be contributing future educators.

Mr. Dixon: So, just to be clear, has the university received any additional funding or additional support from the Yukon government to enhance the early learning and childcare program at the university? If so, how much?

The witness made a very good point that there is federal money available as well, so perhaps they could elaborate a little bit more on what that funding might look like and how we would go about applying for it.

Ms. Brown: The university has not received additional funding at this point in time for early childhood education. I am looking at our transfer agreement from 2020.

Mr. Dixon: Another feature that we have heard expressed from the childcare community is the need for a teaching or learning lab to accommodate the early learning and childcare program. The way the system works now is that students will go on practicums in various daycares throughout the community, but I think that there is a desire from some in the childcare community to see the physical capacity at the university expanded to allow for some sort of practical, hands-on learning to occur at the university.

Has there been any consideration from the university to look at a teaching or learning lab that would allow for that?

Ms. Brown: Thank you for the question, Madam Chair. It is early days for us. Again, we would have to assess demand and also assess the availability of opportunities for internships for our students so that they can achieve the experiential learning that will ensure that they are industry-ready upon graduation. It is a little bit early for us to provide a definitive answer on that one.

Mr. Dixon: So, further to that, earlier today, the witnesses talked about the process by which we launch new degrees, or consider new degrees, and I wanted to ask whether there had been any consideration to the idea of expanding the early learning and childcare program from the current two-year model to something beyond and perhaps even a degree program here in the Yukon.

Ms. Brown: The member is right. We have an early childhood diploma — certificate — and an opportunity to expand that into a degree, but that decision would be informed by the industry needs, and so we would have to do a full environmental scan as a starting point.

Mr. Dixon: So, I understand that. I guess my question would be: Has there been any direction or indication that we would go in that direction — of having an environmental scan to look at that?

One of the reasons I ask is just that obviously childcare has taken increased prominence in our society in the last few years, and the programming and supports for that have increased dramatically from the federal, provincial, and territorial governments. There is certainly a large demand for post-secondary learning in that field. I am not aware of a degree program for early learning that is informed properly with indigenous perspectives. I think that would be an opportunity that the university may want to consider breaking trail on. We may be well-positioned here in the territory to lead the

development of an early learning and childcare degree program that would be informed by an indigenous perspective and indigenous ways of knowing as well. It could be a tremendous opportunity for the university.

It is more of a pitch than a question, but I guess I will ask the witnesses to respond to that.

Ms. Brown: Thank you for the pitch, Madam Chair. The member has identified a tremendous opportunity that is present for the university. Again, we will need to be mindful, going forward, to ensure that we are responding to needs. We will need to be mindful to ensure that we are collecting as much data to inform decisions, that we are aligning with the priorities of our strategic plan, and investing our budgetary resources in accordance to those priorities.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the response.

My colleague asked earlier about the science building. In order to avoid confusion, I would like to ask about the building science program. Has the university begun any work to develop a building science program at the Yukon University that would be tailored to northern climates?

Ms. Brown: Madam Chair, may I ask for a clarification?

Mr. Dixon: My question is whether or not the university has begun to look at the development of a building science program that is tailored to northern climates.

Ms. Brown: Thank you for the clarification, Madam Chair. Again, in deciding investments and developments for academic programs, we would consider the priorities of our strategic plan, consider our available resources, and also consider opportunities and industry demand so that we are responding to the people of the territory. I thank the member for the enthusiasm about that possibility.

Mr. Dixon: Just so I'm clear, the Government of Yukon hasn't provided any funding to the Yukon University — or direction — to develop a building science program at Yukon University that would be tailored to northern climates, as a part of its commitment to address climate change?

Ms. Brown: If I'm interpreting the member correctly with respect to the notion of building science, to the best of my understanding, we do not have any priority funding, or core funding, dedicated to that program. There may be the case that there are concepts or notions within that program, or sprinkled throughout other programs, but as far as a dedicated degree or credential in building science, we do not have that.

Mr. Dixon: I guess it would probably be helpful for context. That was a commitment that the governing party made in their election platform, so I was curious if there had been any action on that, but it doesn't appear that's the case.

The final piece I wanted to ask about was — my colleague did mention the varsity sports program, and the witness has indicated that an RFP would be going out. Can I ask for a bit more detail about what the RFP would be looking at? Obviously, there is a financial consideration to a varsity sports program, but having attended small universities in this country, I can attest that certainly not all schools are well-suited to the full breadth of sports or varsity programs. In most cases, universities will cater their varsity programs to a single or a very few number of sports. Can the witnesses comment a little

on that? How will we delineate that, or how will that decision be made? Will it just be left up to the consultant, whoever gets the RFP, to come up with a variety of options, and we'll consider them then?

Ms. Brown: Again, it's very early, but the intention of the feasibility study is to understand exactly that: Is varsity sports feasible? Specifically, what sports would be relevant and appropriate and be successful and provide a positive experience for students and for the community here in the north?

Mr. Dixon: I will conclude and just thank the witnesses for appearing today. I will allow my colleague from the NDP to raise some questions now as well.

Ms. White: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the witnesses for being here. I will apologize ahead of time for turning my shoulder to you as I ask the questions. I thank my colleagues from the Yukon Party, because they took us through a lot of things and I do appreciate that.

For starters, I would just like to offer my congratulations for the epic amount of work that has happened in the last 20 months, as we hear that the pandemic is ongoing and how it has affected things. I think that the full credit goes to the entire breadth of staff, across all of the Yukon campuses — that the Yukon University has been there. I can say that when we initially started having those conversations about the college transitioning to the university, I flagged concerns — I did — because I think that one of the powers of Yukon College was that it was accessible throughout the territory and there were those community campuses. So, I stand here a full year later and offer my congratulations on the work that was done to make sure that those campuses remained relevant, that the programs that were needed in communities continued, and that there has been an expansion. So, I just wanted to start with that because I feel like it is not often that I get to have both the chair and the president in a room and, of course, one of the master organizers up in the Chamber.

Just before I get started — there was a joint commitment actually in 2019, signed — there was a renewed memorandum of understanding with l'AFY. I can't find anything on the website except for the initial press release that was signed in 2019, but one of the reasons why I am asking about it is because of the importance. Of course, in Canada, we have two official languages and the website — to the best of my ability — is entirely in English. There was a commitment — and I am not going to read it in French, otherwise Hansard has to get a translator in, and that seems unkind, but the title of the press release says: "L'AFY and College commit to new suite of services and programs for Francophone students". So, I just wanted an update on that memorandum of understanding that was signed to promote the advancement of French language education at the post-secondary level in Yukon.

Ms. Brown: Thank you for the question, Madam Chair. I have met with the executive director of l'AFY and discussed the importance of upholding francophone education here in the territory. I learned an awful lot about the presence of the francophone community, particularly here in Whitehorse. I will update that, since the signing, Yukon University has been

working with the francophone association to provide our Yukon First Nation course online and also in French.

Ms. White: I thank the witness for that. That seems to be a benefit for everyone. As we progress, I think it's always one of those outstanding numbers that I think we are the fourth most bilingual place in Canada when it comes to French language — possibly the third, actually — and more than 12 percent of our population identifies as being francophone primary. As we expand that, it is an exciting thing.

I couldn't help but notice when I was on the website the sheer number of experts that Yukon University has. Can the witnesses walk me through what an expert at the university would be called on to do or what they are able to do? Just to give reference to folks, there are dozens of experts. I have to say that if you want to find out how many PhDs are in the Yukon, probably a pretty good spot to start is on this list. Can the witnesses walk me through what kind of services or support the experts at the Yukon University provide?

Ms. Brown: I would answer by saying that the first service that the experts at the university provide is education for students, first and foremost. The other thing that I would say is that often people who are regarded as "experts in their field" inform a number of decisions, whether that be policy, whether that be research priorities, whether that be social or economic changes, or even court witnesses. Experts are regarded to be the top in their field and to have a very strong and broad sense of knowledge in a particular area. They are often called on to guide decisions and inform change.

Ms. White: I thank the witness for that. The annual report does highlight the number of international students. There is something so magical, I would say, that has happened in the Yukon landscape since I was a kid. When I was a child growing up here, there was not a lot diversity in the Yukon. I think that, as we become more diverse, there are more and more reasons to celebrate.

I would like to switch to talking about our international students. I know that often there is targeted recruitment in different regions in the world. Could we just talk about where we might have recruitment efforts and the reasons we might have them there? Then maybe we could just talk a little bit more about our international students.

Ms. Brown: I will start by speaking a little bit about international students and the benefits of bringing international students into communities. It is twofold: First, it is to provide international perspectives for the students who come to the institution from local areas and to help broaden perspectives; the other thing is that we want to emphasize and invite international students to stay within our communities and subsequently introduce new cultures and globalize our communities.

The other thing is that students who return or move on to other countries bring a sense of the community where they attended the institution and furthermore can begin to globalize other communities as well.

With respect to where we attract students from — I had said earlier that we currently have 126, which is 13 percent of our enrolment. We attract students from India, Japan, China,

Italy, Jamaica, Australia, Spain, Bosnia, France, Germany, Mexico, Vietnam, and the USA. With respect to why those markets — international student recruitment is a very precise science, and those markets are available. It of course depends on the demographics of students and their interest in different locations around the country.

Ms. White: I thank the witness for that. I have to say, that list is a lot more expansive than I would think anyone would actually realize. I think that is reason to celebrate.

Maybe when we are back on the other side of a pandemic world, we will be able to have a bit more of an introduction as far as our international students and the community at large.

One of the concerns that we saw a number of years ago was, in the recruitment of international students, housing. We have talked a bit about housing right now and the challenges that face it. I know that we were told that there are 133 students currently in student housing and that there are plans of expanding. One of the things that it would tie into would actually be the endowment lands. It has been mentioned that there are 97 hectares. Are there intentions to build housing on-site, or are we looking at spacing out within the community?

Ms. Brown: At this point, our priority and decisions will be guided by our need to serve students, both domestically and internationally. We will consider all possibilities. At this point, it's a little early to say definitively where we would be expanding into, but we would want to ensure that we are serving our students in the best way possible.

Ms. White: I do appreciate that. I do look forward to additional housing. Folks might imagine — but it's actually in the riding of Takhini-Kopper King, so I'm quite familiar with the housing that is nestled throughout the campus. Some of it is really beautiful, some of it is striving to be as beautiful, and some of it is a little bit more tired. I think I'll leave that for my description. But I'm sure folks can understand that.

I think that it was two years ago when there was a conversation happening with the university and Yukon Housing Corporation about moving the daycare into the basement of 600 College Drive. The reason why I will bring that up is that is a seniors residence. At the time, I had conversations with folks at the university — the then-college — about maybe how to best broach those conversations. There was a barbecue that was hosted. I'm wondering what the status of those conversations is.

Ms. Brown: I was informed that a feasibility study was conducted in 2019-2020 in response to student requests for childcare facilities on campus, but that the need for services, which would be required to operate extended hours from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. to serve the fulsome needs of students, did not meet the requirements of government subsidies and subsequently would have been too expensive to operate. The bottom line is that the feasibility study indicated that it was not feasible — expensive.

Ms. White: Understanding that the feasibility study would have been ahead of the government's announcement about the universal childcare — and keeping 600 College Drive out of it, because I think that just complicates part of the conversation — is there an interest at the university in revisiting

that? I do think that one of the most valuable assets that we can offer people as far as continuing education is actually having access to childcare. At times, not having that access is actually a barrier, so if we believe that education is truly a right, which I believe it is, making sure that people with children are able to attend classes is important.

Will the university be revisiting those conversations with Yukon government now that the universal childcare program exists?

Mr. Morrison: The short answer is yes. It relates back, as well, to an expansion of early childhood learning programs at the university and the need to have more practicum spaces for people who are in these kinds of programs. So, yes, we will revisit it; yes, we are interested in revisiting it. I can't give you a timeline, but yes.

Ms. White: I thank the chair for that. In listening to my colleague talk about the ability of having labs and learning spaces, it seems like a lovely partnership. I look forward to that. When the university is ready to have those conversations with my senior friends, I will offer my support in broaching those. I say that with a smile on my face because they are fantastic, and I can maybe help with that conversation.

I think that an incredible thing about the university actually is the endowment lands. There was a lot of forethought that was there when that gift was made. One of the things that I just wanted to know is — during the territorial election, there was a commitment from the government to work on McIntyre Creek park. I just wanted to know if there has been any conversation with the university around McIntyre Creek park.

Mr. Morrison: Yes, there have been some conversations — early days — around that concept — and very early days. Where that goes from here — we'll be very interested in participating in further discussions.

Ms. White: I do appreciate that. I have been a big advocate of protecting that area for a large number of years. It's right behind my house, so I am very familiar with the marsh space and the creek there and can see it as being a valuable asset to all Yukoners. I will just put in the plug that it's very accessible by public transit, which is one of the very few green spaces you can get to by city bus. So, I thank them for that.

Just flipping back to our international students and understanding that there were travel restrictions in place, did we have international students attending classes remotely from their home countries?

Ms. Brown: It's information that I can't say concretely; however, I will go out on a limb and say that, yes, we did. One of the benefits of online delivery, of course, was that students were able to access their courses in different time zones.

Ms. White: I thank the witness for that. I think that it actually should be a feather in the cap of the university that out of every institution in the world, folks who don't live in Yukon were still choosing to go to Yukon University. I think that is a real success, and I hope that it can be expanded on and we can use that as a growth point.

As a tradesperson, trades are always near and dear to my heart. I know that online right now, we have carpentry, electrical, heavy equipment, millwright, oil burner mechanic,

pipe trades, and welding. I would say those are the ticketed trades, although possibly not — the heavy equipment technician. But for our trades training, for those that go toward the seal — so, the journeyperson recognition — what levels are taught in the Yukon? Typically, in trades, you will have possibly one through four. So, for example, if I wanted to be a millwright, which years are offered in the territory?

Ms. Brown: We offer, I think, three and four, but no red seal trades.

Ms. White: Sorry, just to seek clarification, then — carpentry is a ticketed trade, as is electrical. So, the fourth year needs to be taken out of territory? Is that my understanding?

Ms. Brown: Rather than speculate, I will bring that information forward.

Ms. White: I thank the witness for that. I possibly muddled the water by not asking the question clearly.

One of the concerns that I had highlighted initially, when there was talk about transitioning to Yukon University, was actually losing the trades programs, just because of how incredibly valuable they are. I am happy to know that not only do they continue to exist, but they have actually expanded in the last number of years, which I think is really important.

One of the things — along with the trades programs, there was a really high-tech trailer, and by "trailer", I mean something that would be towed by, like, a very large truck. Sorry, I have lost my vocabulary. So, this very large truck would tow a trailer to communities where folks could do trades training within that trailer. Understanding that last year was a bit exceptional, is that trailer still operational and is that trades training still happening in communities?

Ms. Brown: Madam Chair, the trailer that the member is referring to is our mobile trades trailer. It is absolutely unique — one of a kind — and incredibly impressive. The intention, as its name implies, is to take the trades outside and beyond so that trades training can become accessible. Currently, the trades trailer is in Whitehorse, and it is hosting three introductory courses: introduction to welding, introduction to millwright, and introduction to heavy equipment mechanics.

Earlier in 2021, it was in Dawson City for multi-trades in the mining program, which is co-created with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Minto Mine. Then in January 2022, it will be deployed to Dawson City again for another multi-trades program.

Another benefit of the mobile trades trailer is that it allows us to get a sense of the needs for trades training in communities and to inform future decisions.

Ms. White: I thank the witness for that. Again, I think that is another thing to celebrate, another asset that Yukon University should be incredibly proud of, especially knowing that, despite the challenges in the last 20 months, the trailer has made it out and folks are learning in their communities. I think that's a really lovely thing.

There has been lots of times in this House when we talk about education. I have talked about education in terms of non-academic. I say that in terms of — trades, for example, are not academic. The environmental monitoring program through the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining is an incredible

program, but it is not packaged up in a way that typically academic programs are packaged. It meant that students were having a hard time accessing funding for that program. It's expensive. It's okay that it's expensive; I think the price tag was around the \$10,000 range. One of the points I brought forward to this House before is that education looks different for different people, but if that education leads to career opportunities, it should have access to adequate funding, or equitable funding, to be able to do those programs.

Have there been any conversations between the Yukon University and Yukon government about making sure that students who have graduated from Yukon schools and have access to Yukon grants have the ability to access adequate funding for those non-academic programs?

Mr. Morrison: I will endeavour to get a bit more detail, but we have actually been able to have a fair bit of success with that program in that we have been able to get folks out to some actual mining sites and do some on-site actual teaching as well as the practical side of things. We do recognize the issue. My memory tells me that we had found a solution for some of the funding issues you are talking about, but I will endeavour to get some more information for you.

Ms. White: I thank the witnesses for that and the commitment to get information back. Ultimately, my goal is just to make sure that as many individuals who want to take that program, especially if they have graduated from high school in the Yukon and would qualify for the Yukon grant, could.

With that, Madam Chair, I just want to thank the witnesses for appearing. More than anything, I would thank them for the leadership that they've shown in making sure that education has been accessible in the territory, even though it hasn't been an easy time.

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): Are there any further questions for the witnesses?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that we will take the opportunity to ask a few more questions today. I know that we only have a few minutes left, but I think that since we have both the chair and the president taking the time to come and visit with us today, we will maximize the opportunity to share with Yukoners.

During the last mandate, there was a lot of work done between the university as well as with the government around indigenous governance and the degree of work there. I guess I would start with just asking if maybe they could just share with us how the launch of the indigenous degree has gone, maybe give us a sense of what the uptake has looked like, what you're hearing from instructors, and how it has resonated across the country.

Ms. Brown: Thank you for the question, Deputy Chair. The bachelor of arts in indigenous governance is one of the points of pride for Yukon University. As a southerner coming to the north, I can tell you that it is a degree program that has resonated across this country. I am very proud to share that, at this point in time, for fall 2021, we have 40 students enrolled in that program, which is up from 19 when it was launched in 2018. Last year, we celebrated five graduates and, the year before that, another five.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Great, thank you very much. That is good to hear. I think that this has always been looked upon as potentially a great program that public servants as well as people in the private sector across this country can learn from. As the Leader of the Official Opposition said, it's a great example of a homegrown project.

If the witnesses could share with us a little bit about the strategic planning — the strategic planning previously was probably some of the best I have ever seen. I had an opportunity to sit on that board prior to the university coming into play. Actually, it was right around the time of the announcement. There was an extensive consultation that was done for strategic planning. It really drove all decisions at the board level. Some of that was done internally. One of your former VPs took a lot of that work on. I'm just wondering: What does that work look like? Who are some of the key players in getting that work done? And maybe give a sense that we can tell Yukoners — as that work happened, there was a lot of opportunity for people to feed into the process. If you can maybe share some of that, that would be much appreciated.

Mr. Morrison: I'm going to start, and then Dr. Brown will finish up. From the board's perspective, this is one of our most important tasks as a board, to get that strategic plan — to take it through a process that is thorough and involves as many people in the community as possible. Since early spring, I think we've been doing that. I don't have the numbers at the tip of my fingers, but the number of people that we have consulted is very extensive. We have included students, faculty, and staff within the university but as many groups, organizations, and industries as we possibly could outside the organization. Some of these consultations have happened two and three times, depending on where we're at with folks, particularly staff, faculty, and students.

The process is being managed by the board, but it is being managed primarily by a committee of the board along with Dr. Brown and a facilitator or consultant who facilitates the discussions. I would say that as part of a very busy year, the folks who are on this committee have done a terrific job of making sure that it is as inclusive as possible when it comes to seeking the opinions and the thoughts and suggestions of folks regarding what our strategic direction should be.

I want to just reconfirm that, as part of that, the base that we start from are the commitments that we made when we took on the transition from the college to the university — and those were a couple of the points that Dr. Brown made earlier, and I think they're really important; we are 100-percent committed to continuing what we delivered as a college and delivering additional degree and university-style programs as a university. We will not lose the trades, certificate, and diploma programs that we currently run and we will not move away from the communities. With those underlying tenets, this plan should build on that, and I will let Dr. Brown say a few words.

Ms. Brown: I can't comment on the process of developing the strategic plan prior to my arrival, but I can say that I am incredibly grateful to the board of governors of Yukon University for allowing me a bit of time to catch up to the breadth of the institution and to feel the culture of the institution

and not just understand the organizational structures, the budget, or the academic programs, but to actually feel the institution so that, as we move forward with developing a strategic plan, the final product would be most reflective of the possibilities and the aspirations for Yukon University.

I am very much looking forward to launching a new strategic plan in January 2022 to commit Yukon University as a thriving learning and research institution shaping Canada's north.

I will say that, with respect to the process that I have participated in since arriving here in August, I have read all of the information that was collected prior to my arrival. I have digested it, I have synthesized it, and I have stepped into it. I have held numerous listening sessions with the Yukon University community and, as well, sessions that are directed to the development of the strategic plan. Just this past week, for example, we held engagement sessions with the key stakeholders — starting with students, staff, and faculty of Yukon University — to get feedback as we develop the plan.

We are very close to finalizing a plan. We are at the point of putting a little bit of sparkle onto it. I am very hopeful that it is going to pass through all governance processes in a very positive way and that we will be able to share with our community and the rest of the Yukon the strategic plan for Yukon University 2022-27.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that it is very important to be able to share that information. It is actually a new process, with different levels of governance that have to look at your strategic plan. It's not — as in the previous process which is being accepted by the board. So, I think that it's important that Yukoners understand that.

I'm going to rift a little bit off that. You are, of course, going through a very extensive consultation process. I would like to know: In the current construct of the university, what is the engagement like with indigenous governments? Originally, there was PACFNI, which was the presence committee and was a key interface with First Nation communities. The *Yukon University Act* requires that the university develop an accountability framework that includes engagement with Yukon First Nations as well.

Maybe you could just share with the Assembly what that looks like now, either through your office or even through the board, and how does that feedback come into the decision-making that you are responsible for?

Ms. Brown: I would like to ask the member for a clarification. My question is: Is the reference toward a development of the strategic plan, or is the reference toward the overall decision-making of the institution as a whole?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I'm open to hearing both. I think that a sense of — maybe around the strategic plan, but also just in general. This new configuration may have led to a different process on how you work with some of our indigenous leaders and how you are actually bringing that in. So, strategic plan — how do we go forward? Also, just on an annual basis — and departmentally and through your office — how are you also gleaning direction and advice?

Mr. Morrison: I will just talk a little bit about the board piece, and Dr. Brown will talk about some of the other parts.

The board of governors has been very focused on a lot of things in the past year and a half. One of the challenges that we have always faced is that the board has indigenization principles that we have committed to as a board, and those are published. They actually sit on a big plaque on a wall that everyone can see, and we take our commitment to those very seriously. To help us at the board level, the board has, in this new university situation, a bicameral governance structure, as you know, but we have thought hard about how we do our work as a board and how we measure the work that senior staff and management are doing in terms of making both the strategic plan and our indigenization principles come to life.

We haven't got all the i's dotted and the t's crossed, but we have struck what we call an "indigenous advisory circle" within the board. That comprises particularly the First Nation members of the board. There are six or seven, I believe — as well, Robin Bradasch, who is responsible, on the program side, for our indigenization work at the university. I think that there is also one other position. That structure is there to provide the board with guidance when it is trying to make its decisions, not just on a one-on-one with board members around the table. As we all know, a lot of the work of a board — we meet quarterly and maybe the odd other time during the year, but the committees of the board do a lot of work. We see this as giving us a hand up in terms of how we do that work at the board level.

Ms. Brown: Thank you for the question, Deputy Chair. With respect to the strategic plan, I would inform the member that our board of governors strategic planning committee has representation from not just the board of governors' indigenous members but also faculty indigenous members, who guide and provide feedback regularly.

With respect to my decision-making as the president of the university, I am very privileged to have on my executive team an AVP of indigenization whom I turn to for counsel regularly.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I am just going to finish with an area of our work that is very important, which is the labour market. One of the things that we have been doing and that we have been very happy with when it comes to the labour market — and this has been touched on this afternoon — is also the many international students we have had. The Member for Takhini-Kopper King asked where the students had come from. What I would like to just leave this with is just some information from you — when you are out recruiting international students, I would like to know what trends we are seeing.

The Government of Yukon is in the midst of just getting very close to completing our immigration strategy for the next 10 years, so this key. We consulted with the university around this, but I would like to know: What are the trends and things that employers can keep in mind from what they are hearing here, but also what can government keep in mind as we move forward with our immigration strategy? That will be my last question for today.

Ms. Brown: My answer is informed by my experience prior to coming to Yukon University. I will say that the current trends for international students, first and foremost — Canada

is a desired destination for international students, and because of that, it is a tremendous opportunity for us to recruit students.

The other thing that I will say is that Canada is also a destination that students want to come to. They want to stay, and they want to have a family life here — again, another opportunity for us. I will leave it at that.

Deputy Chair: Are there any further questions for the witnesses?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would like to thank our incoming president for Yukon University, Dr. Lesley Brown, and, of course, our chair, David Morrison, and Lacia Kinnear for being here today. I thank the witnesses for the information that was shared. I very much appreciate your attendance here in the Legislative Assembly today.

Deputy Chair: Thank you. The witnesses are now excused.

Witnesses excused

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Klondike that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

May the House have a report from the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 10, entitled *Act to Amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021)*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Also, pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 3 adopted earlier today, witnesses appeared before Committee of the Whole to answer questions related to Yukon University.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that the House do now adjourn.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to

Speaker: This House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:23 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled November 23, 2021:

35-1-31

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Tredger related to general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — carbon tax tracking (Pillai)

The following legislative returns were tabled November 23, 2021:

35-1-15

Response to Written Question No. 4 re: Whistle Bend school (McLean)

35-1-16

Response to Written Question No. 11 re: individualized education plans (McLean)

The following document was filed November 23, 2021:

35-1-29

Amending Bill No. 8, *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*, to extend occupational cancer presumptions to wildland forest firefighters, letter re (dated November 22, 2021) from Stephanie Smith, President, BC General Employees' Union, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (White)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 37

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, November 24, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Sandy Silver	Clondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier Government House Leader* Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
Hon. Nils Clarke	Riverdale North	Minister of Highways and Public Works; Environment
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Government House Leader* Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Minister of Economic Development; Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Jeanie McLean	Mountainview	Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

Currie Dixon	Leader of the Official Opposition Copperbelt North	Scott Kent	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Yvonne Clarke	Porter Creek Centre	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Emily Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Annie Blake	Vuntut Gwitchin

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

*Government House Leader: Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee to November 4, 2021; Hon. John Streicker from November 5, 2021

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, November 24, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.
 We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will proceed with the Order Paper.
 Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Dixon: I would like to ask members to join me in welcoming a few friends here. We have Melanie Brais and Morgan Yuill here in the gallery.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: I would also ask members to join me in welcoming constituent Peter Wojtowicz to the gallery.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Movember

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise in the House today on behalf of all members to recognize Movember, the annual month-long event that aims to improve health outcomes for men around the world.

In my younger days, when I heard the word “moustache”, I probably thought of either the iconic Tom Selleck or the equally iconic Freddie Mercury, although, of course, I am dating myself. Today, the word has a much broader meaning for many of us. We think of far more important things. Movember reminds us that it is okay to lighten up if it will ultimately help to open a discussion. I think that the fact that facial hair has become a symbol for an important cause is a clear demonstration of the reach and success of the still growing international movement.

I have fairly evidently not had much success in growing a credible moustache myself over the many years, in contrast to some of my colleagues in the Assembly, but I have always been supportive of Movember.

Since its inception in 2004, the Movember Foundation has raised \$837 million and funded over 1,200 projects in more than 20 countries. These projects focus on mental health and suicide prevention, prostate cancer, and testicular cancer.

The foundation, through its Movember events, raises funds, creates awareness, and encourages men to have conversations about their health. These conversations are crucial, because they can, and do, save lives. Research shows that early detection of prostate and testicular cancer increases the chances of survival.

We also know that early intervention can save the lives of people who are thinking about suicide. There is a belief that

talking about suicide can cause a person to kill themselves or at least make them think about it. The research has also shown us that this most definitely is not true. Asking someone if they are thinking about suicide is much more likely to save their life than it is to put that life at risk, but there is still a strong stigma associated with suicide. As a society, we are afraid to talk about it, even though it has such profound impacts.

In Canada, 11 people die by suicide each day. That’s 4,000 people a year who are taken from us far too soon. Mr. Speaker, suicide is the second-leading cause of death among those 15 to 34 years of age, and, of course, there’s a specific reason why the Movember movement focuses on suicide in men; this is because suicide rates are three times higher among men than among women.

The need to have conversations about this topic has grown even stronger over the past 20 months. We know that social isolation is a risk factor for mental health issues and that mental illness is the most important risk factor for suicide. We also know that increased isolation is one of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated restrictions.

When a person is alone, there is nobody there to see the warning signs and offer help. Movember is a reminder that we need to have open conversations with the men in our lives. We need to encourage men to get regular checkups for prostate and testicular cancer, and we need to help men and boys to understand that it is okay for them to talk about their health and well-being. They need to know that this is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Yukoners to support the individual or group fundraising efforts of all people here in the Yukon. To do so, you can visit movember.com and search for “Yukon”.

Applause

In recognition of Radon Action Month

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to Radon Action Month. In November of every year, governments and organizations across Canada urge citizens to test their homes for radon and to take action to protect themselves if their home tests above the Health Canada guideline.

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that can collect in houses. It is estimated that a non-smoker exposed to high levels of radon over a lifetime has a one in 20 chance of developing lung cancer. The incident rate increases to one in three for a person who smokes. Here in Yukon, we have some of the highest levels of radon in Canada. The only way to know if your home has radon is to test for it.

Yukon Housing Corporation has been raising awareness about radon since 1989 and has supported radon research through the testing, storing, and analysis of the data from over 3,000 homes. This year, Yukon Housing Corporation has provided a number of radon test kits in its community offices. In Whitehorse, these test kits can be purchased at Home Hardware with a subsidy for \$10.

Testing for radon in your home is simple. Homeowners use the small testers that sit in your home for at least three months. They then are sent to a certified lab for analysis. We urge

Yukoners to mitigate if their home's radon level is above the Health Canada guideline.

To help, Yukon Housing Corporation's home repair program can provide funding for eligible homeowners to reduce radon levels in their homes to meet or exceed the guidelines.

It is important to reiterate that the only way to know what the radon level is in your home is to test for it. Radon levels can vary widely from one home to another in the same area. All Yukon schools and the Yukon Housing Corporation units have been tested for radon. If mitigation was required, it has happened. We know that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed our habits and increased the amount of time that Yukoners spend at home, so we encourage Yukoners to test their homes this winter.

Thank you to all of our partners who continue to help promote radon awareness and radon action and work to keep Yukoners healthy in their homes.

Ms. Clarke: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize November as Radon Action Month. Radon gas is not something at the top of someone's mind when they are looking to rent, purchase, or build a home. It is invisible and requires a radon kit to detect it. It is also radioactive and a leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers. In fact, radon exposure is the cause of 16 percent of lung cancer deaths in Canada.

Radon is typically found in the lowest levels of the home, such as basements and crawl spaces. It varies from house to house and by neighbourhood, depending on the type of construction and air exchange in the home and the geology of the area. The gas comes from a natural breakdown of uranium in the ground and the release of tiny particles, which in turn seep into homes through cracks in the foundation, pipes, and other openings. Average radon test results throughout the Yukon from 2006 to 2018 can be found on an interactive map on the government website. Some areas south of Whitehorse show high levels of radon, and residents should know that if their home has not been tested, it is a good idea to do so. Canyon Crescent, Whitehorse Copper, Wolf Creek, and Pineridge all showed elevated levels of radon on average.

Measuring radon levels in a home is easy, relatively inexpensive, and can be done by the resident. A long-term radon detector is placed in the lowest level of the home, and the testing is done over a number of months. The detector is mailed to a lab for analysis and, depending on results, mitigation could take place. Mitigation procedures include ventilation improvement and the sealing of cracks and openings in basement floors and walls and around pipes and drains.

I encourage Yukoners to look into whether their home has been tested. If not, invest in a radon testing kit and take the steps to mitigate their homes if necessary.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to acknowledge Radon Action Month.

As mentioned by my colleagues, radon is a colourless, odourless gas, although you might be interested to know that it

actually emits a bright yellow light when it is below minus 71 degrees Celsius and then turns an orange-red colour at minus 180 degrees Celsius, but that is not too likely to occur here in the Yukon, so we have to rely on testing kits to detect it.

As mentioned by my colleague, it gathers in low-lying places such as basements and poses serious health risks. We join our colleagues in urging everyone to test their homes for radon, but the problem is that there is a financial barrier to getting the testing kits.

As mentioned, the kits are subsidized by the Yukon Lung Association, and we thank the association for working to make them accessible. We also appreciate that Yukon Housing Corporation is making the kits available in communities, but if you are in Whitehorse, the kits still cost \$50, so today we will be tabling a motion calling on the Yukon government to make radon testing kits free for all Yukoners. The personal, social, and financial cost of even one person developing lung cancer is far greater than the cost of prevention.

So, for Radon Action Month, let's take action.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling today a report prepared by the Canadian Institute for Health Information entitled *Physicians in Canada, 2019 — Summary report*.

Ms. Tredger: I have for tabling a letter from the women's equality fund's funding recipients about their core funding.

Ms. White: I have for tabling the Yukon Employees' Union submission to the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, entitled "Recommendations for amendments to the *Workers' Compensation Act* and *Occupational Health and Safety Act*", dated January 15, 2020. This report includes recommendation 6 to include wildland firefighters and all firefighter presumptions and recommendation 7 to expand cancer presumption for all Yukon firefighters.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Ms. Tredger: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to make home radon test kits available to Yukoners free of cost by creating a 100-percent rebate program.

Ms. White: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the City of Whitehorse recycling centres and the City of Whitehorse to end the cap on diversion credits.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Battery energy storage system project

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am pleased to rise today to provide an update on the battery energy storage system project. Put simply, the battery project is being added to our main electrical grid to help Yukon Energy meet the growing demand for electricity in the Yukon. Integrating storage technologies that are suitable to our colder climate further allows us to enhance our renewable sources of electricity. This project also does so much more than just meet peak demands for power.

The battery storage project is also an excellent example of how Yukon Energy is partnering with First Nations — in this case, Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council — to displace diesel and support Yukon's clean energy future.

We know that climate change affects everyone, and it is clear from the increasingly frequent climate catastrophes in Canada and around the world that more action needs to be taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase the supply of renewable energy sources.

This is why the battery project is so critical. Once it is complete, it will replace the need for four rental diesel generators each winter, reducing Yukon's reliance on fossil fuels to produce electricity during the winter. The battery is a seven-megawatt, or 40-megawatt hour, energy storage system. The battery energy storage system is expected to reduce carbon emissions in the Yukon by more than 20,000 tonnes between 2023 and 2043, making a significant difference in the territory's fight against climate change.

Funding is being provided by the federal government through the Investing in Canada infrastructure program green infrastructure stream, totalling \$16.5 million. The battery itself will be made up of container units that are quick and easy to install, easy to expand, and made for our northern climate. The battery units being sourced will utilize the most common battery chemistry for grid-scale battery energy storage systems, lithium-ion. This technology provides more flexibility by allowing the battery to be charged and depleted many times throughout its lifetime. It's also considered safe. The risk for fire is very, very low.

The battery project is part of Yukon Energy's 10-year renewable plan and supports the goals articulated in *Our Clean Future* by reducing the use of diesel-generated electricity, reducing emissions, and partnering with First Nations in clean energy projects.

The request for proposal process is well underway. Currently, submissions are being reviewed, and I can share with the House that the Yukon Energy Corporation anticipates being able to announce the name of the successful battery vendor early in 2022. Currently, the battery project remains on target for completion by the end of 2022.

Mr. Speaker, the battery energy storage project is one of the many steps that the Yukon needs to take to ensure that an average of 97 percent of our electricity comes from renewable sources by 2030.

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Party Official Opposition supports initiatives that reduce our greenhouse gases. We have made this clear previously — most recently in yesterday's ministerial statement response. I would like to thank the minister for the update on the battery project. We have had quite a bit of information on this project during the Sitting, between the minister and witnesses, so we are looking forward to seeing it move forward. We are also looking for an updated budget and timeline when we next discuss it.

Ms. Tredger: Since the conversation first started, the Yukon NDP has been supportive of a grid-scale battery, and it's exciting to see this project become a reality. When this battery comes online, it will help the Yukon Energy Corporation meet the peak demands that we face for electricity during winter months. This is not only a good thing, but a critical step for the Yukon's energy future.

Years ago when my colleague, the Leader of the NDP, was attending workshops and information sessions about wind generation, storage was highlighted as a shortcoming of the Yukon's electrical grid. Being able to charge the battery during off-peak time or during times of high wind, once we see wind turbines installed, opens up new possibilities for wind energy and other renewable energy generation. We're very much looking forward to seeing these projects supported and integrated into our energy system. This is about making sure that Yukoners have a reliable supply of energy, and it is also about climate action.

There is so much work to do and we are excited to get to it. Another important step is reducing demand for energy by making homes and commercial buildings more efficient. As this government often says, though, we need a collaborative approach. While that has not been the approach to energy retrofits so far, we hope that there is still time for that to change. We remain optimistic that the Minister of Community Services will do the work to get municipalities onside so that we can support the changes to the municipal and taxation acts before the end of this session.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I would like to thank both of the members opposite for their comments and their support; it is appreciated.

I will just add a couple of other details that I got before I came down for today's session. I was informed by Yukon Energy that the size of the project will take up about half of the size of the field inside the new track and field, so it's about 50 by 50 metres. It is in containers, so it will be about twice our height.

It's going on Robert Service Way, and the site is Kwanlin Dün First Nation land, as I previously noted here in the Legislature. Thanks for the comments from the members opposite. The clearing for the site has been happening. I

reached out to Kwanlin Dün. They assured me that they are working to make sure that any firewood is being salvaged and going to elders or citizens within Kwanlin Dün. Again, thanks for that suggestion.

For the Member for Porter Creek North, if I get any information talking about changes to timelines or budgets, I will make sure to bring them forward to members. Currently, as I said, things are on track, so that's good news.

I will agree with the Member for Whitehorse Centre that we do need a collaborative approach. I wasn't going to talk about the better buildings project, but I will make a couple of comments. I agree that we should be working with municipalities. That's why it's good that the legislation that is before us is enabling and not requiring. For those municipalities that might be ready to go — I know of a couple that the minister has been in conversation with — and also for all unincorporated communities, we can start and we can continue to work. I began the work with municipalities about two years ago now, working on this. I agree that there is a potential download around the recovering of the local improvement charges through property taxes, but I also believe that there are good solutions for that and that we can work to make it a win for our municipalities. I'm confident that the minister has been working diligently with municipalities, and I look forward to that work continuing.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Whitehorse Centre is correct that, when we have this battery project in place, we can use the battery during our morning and evening peaks of energy rather than running the diesels. Then, in the nighttime, we can recharge the battery with hydro so that it drops the use of diesels.

When we get the new wind project that is starting up on Haeckel Hill — I'm so looking forward to that, and it's another great project. When the wind is blowing, we can use that energy rather than the batteries, and when the wind is not blowing, we can use the batteries, so the batteries make our renewables better.

Of course, we will look for seasonal storage through Moon Lake in the long-term plan. These are all exciting developments and I'm glad that, step by step, we are achieving our clean future. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Before we proceed with Question Period today, I want to make mention here that we welcome the public to the gallery, but you are here to observe, not participate. Please do not clap or otherwise participate in the proceedings. Thank you.

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Physician recruitment and retention

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, as you know, one-fifth of Yukoners are without a family doctor. The problem has been getting worse under this government. Earlier today, my colleague tabled a report from the Canadian Institute for Health Information, which is cited by the *Putting People First* report that the Deputy Premier has quoted from as recently as this

week. That report includes a startling statistic, which is that Yukon has fewer doctors per capita than any other jurisdiction.

Can the Deputy Premier explain why the Yukon is not doing more to recruit doctors when we are so clearly lagging behind the rest of the country?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am happy to stand and speak to Yukoners about this really important issue for our primary health care here in the territory. I can make reference to *Putting People First*. I am not sure that we can do that enough. It is an independent, comprehensive review of Yukon's health care system, not just primary health care from physicians, from nurse practitioners, care in our hospitals, or other aspects of the health and social services system, but it is, in fact, a comprehensive review of what needs to change and how things can be better here in the territory with respect to how we deliver health care to Yukoners, how they experience health care, and the opportunities for us to improve that going forward.

The 76 recommendations in *Putting People First* do provide us with a road map for the future. This is a road map that we are working to begin implementation of. We have implementation committees, and we are working with the Yukon Medical Association and other stakeholders to determine how *Putting People First* will unfold and the positive effect that it will have for Yukoners for health care.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I would remind the minister that the document that we have tabled and that we are citing now is, in fact, cited by *Putting People First*, and the Deputy Premier has quoted that as recently as this week. Not only does it show that we had the fewest physicians per capita, but it reveals another startling trend, which is that during the Liberals' last term in office, Yukon was the only jurisdiction in the entire country to see our number of doctors per capita decrease.

So, for context, while the number of Yukoners on a wait-list for a family doctor has been growing, the number of doctors has been shrinking under the Liberals.

How does the Deputy Premier explain this unfortunate trend that is occurring as a result of Liberal inaction and as demonstrated by the very reports that *Putting People First* cites?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: In 2013, the president of the Yukon Medical Association estimated that as many as 21 percent of Yukoners did not have access to a primary-care physician. This was, in fact, confirmed by the *Putting People First* report, which also found that 21 percent of Yukoners do not have access to a physician. During the 2014 calendar year, the Yukon was supported by a total of 61 resident physicians and 10 specialists. During the 2020 calendar year, the Yukon was supported by a total of 75 resident physicians and an additional 20 specialists. In 2020, the Yukon was also supported by 95 visiting physicians and specialists.

This is not the only answer to the issues that are raised by *Putting People First*, but it is one method, one challenge, that has been tackled by this government in moving forward to provide primary health care and comprehensive health care with wraparound services for individual Yukoners in the

territory or having access to that in a way that is supportive for them by our health and social system.

Mr. Dixon: I would remind the minister that the report that we tabled shows that the Yukon was the only jurisdiction in the country to see a reduction in the number of doctors per capita over their time — over the last term. I should note, Mr. Speaker, for the Legislature that this report did not come to us by accident; it was shared with us by members of the physician community who have been following this debate, presumably because they share our concerns that the government isn't doing enough to recruit more doctors and take stronger action to address the primary care crisis that our territory is facing.

We would encourage the Deputy Premier to start sharing the information of that nature that has occurred under her watch. The Canadian Institute for Health Information offers the best available information and is even cited by the Deputy Premier's own *Putting People First* report.

So, will she acknowledge that not enough has been done to recruit doctors to the Yukon, and will she agree to redouble efforts to address the growing health care crisis in Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I don't have much difficulty with the last part of that question because I have been saying that for a number of weeks here in the Legislative Assembly about our work here in the territory to increase physician services for Yukoners — not just the number of physicians. We have nurse practitioners; we have nursing staff; we have other important health care providers. Opportunities for Yukoners to have access to them are incredibly important.

I should note that, as part of our implementation of *Putting People First*, we are moving forward with adding more nurse practitioners, expanding access to virtual care alternatives, and exploring options for primary health care reform. I can also indicate that, between 2014 and 2020, the number of resident physicians and specialists in the territory has increased by 33.8 percent. During that same period of time, Yukon's population was, as we all know, increasing and putting pressure on all of our systems. The population is estimated to have increased during that same period of time by 16 percent.

This is a critical issue for Yukoners. We recognized that many years ago, and that's why we instituted the *Putting People First* report, and that's why we're implementing its recommendations.

Question re: Building renovation program

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, 41 days ago, the Minister of Community Services tabled a piece of legislation to create what he calls the "better building program", yet, since that time, he has refused to call it to debate. He has even refused to call it for second reading. Early last week, he boldly told the media that he would call it for debate and a vote on November 18 but then didn't live up to his words.

Can the minister tell us why he got cold feet on this piece of legislation and why he is not confident enough to bring it forward for debate?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Once again, I have to say that I disagree with the preamble put forward by the member

opposite. It is frankly wrong. Mr. Speaker, what happened last week was that — there is a lot of interest in this program, of course. There is a lot of interest in the municipalities, and there is a lot of support for this program in the municipalities. They were having a meeting on the weekend, and I was approached by several municipal leaders who asked me to put off tabling the legislation until I could actually have a conversation with them.

I had a great conversation with the municipal leaders over the weekend, and I continue to have ongoing conversations now with municipal leaders across the territory. I had another one this morning. I'm going to continue to talk to them and answer the questions that they have about this program, because there is widespread support for it.

The thing I have learned is that municipal leaders truly do want action on climate change. They see what has happened in BC; they see what happened in the Yukon last summer. They have heard the remarks at COP 26 that it is too late. We have to stop kicking the can down the road. We have to take tangible action on climate change, and so we are going to do that.

Mr. Hassard: I think it's important for the minister to also realize that municipal leaders want to be listened to. We know what is clear here, and it is that the minister told media that he was going to get this piece of legislation done. He was going to bring it to a vote last Thursday, but then he got cold feet.

Will the minister commit that he will not use the guillotine clause on this bill and actually allow the Legislature to have debate on this? Yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I really do appreciate the opportunity that the member opposite is giving me to stand today and talk about this program, because, frankly, I have heard from Yukoners, and I was actually talking to the Yukon Chamber of Commerce this morning. They assured me that they really do want to see this program go forward, as do their members. They are solidly behind this program. These are Yukon businesses across the territory that are solidly behind this program and want to see the enabling legislation passed in this Sitting of the Legislature so that they can actually start to see progress on the municipal front and get this program offered to all Yukoners. That is what I was told this morning.

I am more than happy to bring that piece of legislation forward so that members opposite can address it and have their opposition to this piece of legislation put on the public record. We on this side believe that we have to take action on climate change. The time for waiting is far beyond where it should be. It's time to actually take tangible action to start to make our homes more affordable and to start to bring down our greenhouse gas emissions in the territory. We know that retrofitting houses is one of the best ways to do that, and I look forward to the debate in this House.

Mr. Hassard: I think it's important that Yukoners know that the support letter that the minister speaks about from the Yukon Chamber of Commerce — at the bottom of that letter, it said that their support was contingent on support from Yukon municipalities.

This conversation with the municipalities should have been done long before this legislation ever came forward to the House. Again, will the minister agree to bring this legislation forward and not use the guillotine clause?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Again, I have been speaking with municipal leaders across the territory for months now, actually, but in the last several weeks, as the potential opposition to this piece of enabling legislation that would allow municipalities to opt in to the program. It doesn't commit them to everything, but it enables us to actually have them come in, because they are responsible governments and they have to make their own decisions. There are three pages of legislation. It is very, very small. It simply allows the program to go ahead and for municipalities to opt in.

Just this morning, I was talking to the Mayor of Whitehorse about this and she talked about the support that she is hearing from the community as well. This is a good program for the territory. There are some concerns, and I have assured the Association of Yukon Communities in writing that I will meet and work with them on these concerns over the winter as we move forward to launch this program that will reduce heating costs for Yukoners at a time when propane costs are going up. We have seen that. It will make sure that we can reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, it will help our economy, and it will bring jobs to rural Yukon. This is a good program for all, and I look forward to having that debate in the coming days.

Question re: Internet connectivity

Ms. Tredger: With more and more people working from home and classrooms being closed on a regular basis, reliable access to good quality Internet is essential to many Yukoners. That is obvious, yet we are hearing from Yukoners dealing with Internet outages and debilitatingly slow speeds. We know that fibre optic cables are currently being installed in some communities, but some houses are metres away from the cables and still unable to connect. Unreliable Internet connection across the territory is negatively impacting many families and has been for years.

What is this government doing now to ensure reliable access to Internet for all Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am happy to talk about Internet service this afternoon. It is a very important issue to this government and it has been since we were first elected. I know that the Minister of Economic Development and I went through and toured a number of businesses early in our mandate to talk to them about the reliability of Internet services, so we have been working on that file diligently since we were elected. We actually have worked with Northwestel to get what I am calling a "connect Yukon 2.0 initiative". We have sent letters to the CRTC, and we were actually successful in getting the CRTC's support for a groundbreaking Internet fibre link program across rural Yukon that is going to bring high-speed Internet to places like Faro, Mayo, and other rural communities that haven't seen it before. It will be transformative for the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, that's not all we've done. We've also reached out to Starlink, an Internet service provider, to make sure that we're getting more robust Internet into our rural Yukon and

places that don't have Internet, because we saw that this satellite Internet service was threatened last year. We have taken action on that as well. I have been in touch with the Washington-based company.

We are doing all sorts of things here to make sure that reliable Internet is not only expanded — I haven't even touched on the redundant fibre link, Mr. Speaker. There is more to say on this. I look forward to more questions.

Ms. Tredger: Fibre optic Internet is far from being ruled out in all rural communities. We have also been hearing regular reports of Internet dead zones everywhere in the Yukon, even within the City of Whitehorse, due to aging infrastructure. In some parts of town, it seems that when the cables get too old, instead of being replaced, customers are linked into neighbouring houses as a quick fix.

What is the government doing to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is upgraded?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, has indicated, Northwestel is improving Internet connectivity for Yukon's communities through its Every Community project. This new infrastructure will increase broadband speeds for rural Yukon.

The timelines for the upgrades from Northwestel are as follows: 2020, Whitehorse and Carcross were advised that it is substantially complete, and I certainly hear the comments from the member opposite about some dead zones but — nevertheless; 2021, Dawson City, Watson Lake, and Teslin; 2022, Haines Junction, Champagne, Destruction Bay, Burwash Landing, and Beaver Creek; and in 2023, we have Mayo, Stewart Crossing, Pelly Crossing, Carmacks, Faro, Ross River, the outlying areas of Whitehorse, Judas Creek, Marsh Lake, Tagish, and other outlying areas around Carcross. Also in 2023, we have — Old Crow satellite bandwidth and local infrastructure will be upgraded in two phases. The first phase will offer up to 15 gigabytes per second download speeds and a 200-gigabyte data allowance, while the second phase will see speeds increased to 50 megabytes per second with unlimited data.

A lot of exciting work is planned, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Tredger: The pandemic has shown that access to reliable highspeed Internet is no longer a luxury but a necessity in 2021. Appointments with health practitioners are moving online. Education is very much online now.

But we are seeing a massive disparity in who can access these essential services and who cannot. Some families' Internet bills are tripling so that their kids can attend classes that have been moved online. Some communities have such slow connections that things like video conferencing are right off the table. This is a growing inequality and this needs to be fixed.

What is the government doing now to make sure that all communities have access to the same reliable and affordable Internet?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this line of questions today because it is fitting as we get into some other votes today as we compare and contrast.

First of all, what we are doing is building a 777-kilometre redundant fibre line across 1,100 water crossings, and we have negotiated one of the best deals in the country to finance that. The majority of the money has come in from the federal government, and what we are seeing is a complete redundancy of all three territories now with their telecommunications.

As my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, touched on, this new revitalization within the Yukon of our rural communities and Whitehorse actually has us on track to be the most connected territory or province in the country, so I think that this is very substantial. What we are seeing is fibre to, I think, over 90 percent of homes in the Yukon.

Again, where there have been challenges through COVID-19, we have stepped in, we have worked with First Nation leaders, and we have worked with Northwestel in many cases to ensure that the right capacity has been in place, and we commend Northwestel on the pricing models that they put in place. We do have that opportunity for unlimited, which is something that wasn't in place previously. So, I think that when you take a look at the complete package of what has happened from a standpoint of telecommunications, although we are in a very challenging district from a geographical standpoint, we are now looking at being a leader in this country.

Question re: Rural solid-waste transfer stations

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, residents in communities that are currently served by transfer stations that the Minister of Community Services is going to shut down remain concerned about their options for dealing with solid waste. When I asked about this earlier in the Sitting, the minister indicated that he had not yet met with several communities that will see their facilities close.

Will the minister commit to meet with all of the communities that are affected by the closure of solid-waste transfer stations before he closes them down, and will he listen to their input and reconsider closing these transfer stations?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am grateful to hear the voice from the Member for Kluane who was benched last session, so it's good to hear his voice in the Legislature again. We are modernizing and improving the territory's solid-waste management system to ensure that our practices follow sustainable and nationally recognized standards in solid-waste management, and we are committed to raising the standards at transfer stations and landfills across the territory.

This has been a multi-phase project that began with my colleague, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. He started this program, and we have successfully implemented phase 1; we're now in phase 2. That does involve the closure of transfer stations in four very small communities. We're doing that, Mr. Speaker, because we know that people will dump really hazardous waste at those sites, and we don't want to have any loopholes where people can dispose of their garbage for free. We are putting in tipping fees at all of our landfills. They are going to be properly managed and supervised, and we just don't want any place where people can get around those rules. So, we are actually closing those transfer stations, but I have made the commitment to sit down and talk to communities that

are going to be affected by these changes that are going to happen, and I'm happy to do that.

Mr. Istchenko: It would be great to get some times for these meetings when the minister will sit down to listen.

The minister has also said before that he came to Destruction Bay as a part of his community tour. I would like to remind him that it was the residents of the community who organized the meeting and invited the minister, not the other way around. The residents of Destruction Bay were so upset with the minister's dismissive attitude at that meeting that they started a petition and demanded more consultation and more involvement. Long before that meeting, community members had solutions to propose as alternatives to the government's plans to close these facilities.

Will the minister agree to consider the input of rural Yukoners and reverse his cuts to the solid-waste services?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Once again, I'm going to disagree with the preamble and the suspicious narrative being woven by the Official Opposition. Quite frankly, I did meet with the residents of Destruction Bay. We had a two-hour meeting on a very snowy day. I have heard their concerns, and their concerns have fed into the plans to close the transfer station. The Department of Community Services has reached out, as have I, to residents up there. As far as a cut to transfer stations, this is really where I have my dispute with the member opposite. We're not cutting our waste management.

As a matter of fact, what we're doing is making sure we invest in it so it is properly managed, so it is actually supervised and the sites are safer and the waste that goes in — we know what's going in, and we're closing any loopholes where Yukoners can actually go out and dispose of hazardous waste and oils and everything else without paying a tipping fee, without being supervised by a waste management supervisor.

I am happy to talk about this in future questions.

Mr. Istchenko: I would remind the minister — and actually the previous minister — that these decisions were made with zero consultation with anyone.

The minister has also said that the closure of the solid-waste transfer station in question came about as a result of consultation with the Association of Yukon Communities. AYC has indicated to us that, while they were consulted about solid waste, it was not their recommendation that the Yukon government cut or close the transfer stations.

The Official Opposition and Third Party have requested that the government reverse these planned cuts, or complete closures, to transfer stations. Will the minister listen to the views of rural Yukoners, the Official Opposition, and the Third Party and reverse these planned cuts or closures?

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order, please. Those in attendance in the gallery, you are required to wear your mask unless you have a medical note, so please wear your mask.

Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Again, we are talking about transfer stations this afternoon, and I am more than happy to talk about

this issue. We have consulted with the Association of Yukon Communities. As a matter of fact, what happened at the very beginning of our mandate — my colleague, the former Minister of Community Services, was approached by AYC, who basically said, please, please, we have to get a handle on our solid-waste management in this territory. It is at a state where we are really concerned with the state of our solid-waste management facilities, and we really need you to step up and start to put some controls in place.

So, we listened. We did listen. We continue to listen, and I have no problem going out to the communities and hearing the concerns of people who will be affected by these changes that are coming and hearing ways that we can mitigate and work with them so that — in the face of these necessary changes — we can help them adapt to these necessary changes. That is what I have committed to do. I will continue to do that, because the voices of Yukoners matter to this government, and we will continue to go out and have those hard conversations, hear the concerns, and see how we can best serve their interests.

Question re: Non-confidence in government

Mr. Cathers: The Premier and his Liberal government have a record of demonstrating a lack of respect for the Legislative Assembly. It begins with a habit that they have developed of often not even trying to answer questions during Question Period. Their lack of respect for the Assembly includes ignoring motions passed in this House, like the Member for Watson Lake's motion to improve highway safety for her constituents.

Last month, the Deputy Premier became the first minister in Yukon history to lose the confidence of the House, with a motion passed urging her to resign from Cabinet. The Liberals ignored that decision of the Legislature, and their record of disrespect suggests that, even if a motion were passed calling for a public inquiry into the Hidden Valley scandal, the Liberals would ignore it.

So, I have a question for the Premier: If he loses the confidence of the House, does he intend to respect that decision?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Strong leadership is exactly what we need right now in the Legislative Assembly and in the Yukon, and it has guided us through the pandemic. It has kept our economy going. The Yukon has enjoyed economic growth every single year since we took office, including during the pandemic. The Yukon had the highest GDP growth in Canada in 2020.

We will continue to provide steady and stable leadership, as required, to get us out of the pandemic and on the pathway forward.

The Leader of the Yukon Party — well, they have demonstrated in the past, as well, that they will do just about anything to get into power and say whatever they need to say, depending on who they are talking to as well. Just like the federal Conservatives, the Leader of the Yukon Party either stays silent on an issue or he takes both sides. We have seen what they play out here, as far as confidence. I have been on my feet many times to talk about how confident I am in this

government, in the leadership here, in my ministers, and I will continue to say that I have the utmost confidence in this Liberal government, and we will continue to do the good work of moving forward for health and social services, moving forward for education, moving forward for the economy, and moving forward for reconciliation as well. That is what we were hired to do, and we will continue to do that.

Mr. Cathers: Well, the Premier seems to forget that he lost the popular vote this spring and just barely hung onto power. The Liberal government has a record of demonstrating a lack of respect for this Legislative Assembly. It includes ignoring motions passed by the majority of MLAs in this Assembly.

The main reason that there is a debate today on a motion of non-confidence is because the Liberals refused to respect a motion that was passed by this House last month calling on the Deputy Premier to resign. It is clear that if this House were to ever pass a motion calling for a public inquiry into the Hidden Valley scandal, the Liberals would probably just ignore that too.

Can the Premier tell us why his government so frequently ignores and disrespects motions that were passed in the Legislature and refuses to listen to the expressed will of this House?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, the Yukon Party goes back and forth, and it's clear that they will do anything they can to get into power. On one side of the year, we hear them talking about CASA and how horrible the items inside CASA are. Then we hear the leader, last week, saying that he will honour everything in CASA — again, anything they can do to get into power. We have seen the line of questioning, the personal attacks — we have seen it all this session, in terms of what the Yukon Party will do to get into power.

Basically, this is, for the most part, the same Yukon Party that got voted out in 2016. The Yukon Party lost confidence then in 2016. We are the government of the day. We do have an agreement with the Third Party to make sure that the Yukon continues forth in stability and security for Yukoners, which is extremely important in most times, and is definitely even more important during these times of a pandemic.

I would urge the Yukon Party to maybe change their tack a bit and try to actually work together with the two other parties to try to get us onto the path to recovery better and try to allay some of the misinformation on vaccinations and maybe even work together with us for a better Yukon for the future.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, the Premier conveniently forgets that the first thing he did in the pandemic was refuse to work with us on an all-party committee we proposed. They lost the popular vote in the spring, which we won, of course. The Liberals barely hung onto power.

It is clear that the only way to actually get a public inquiry into the Hidden Valley scandal, and to get answers for parents, is to replace the Liberals with a government that is committed to launching a public inquiry covering the entire period from when the former EA was first hired. There are parents listening who are interested in how the House will vote, because today's motion is about holding the government accountable for

leaving parents in the dark. Today's motion is the only way to guarantee that there will be a public inquiry into what happened.

I will give the Premier one last chance: Will he ask for the resignation of the Deputy Premier and launch a public inquiry into everything that happened, going back to 2014, including who knew what and when, including ministers, and why the Deputy Premier knew about the incident in 2019, but did not inform parents and did not share this information with the current Education minister?

Hon. Mr. Silver: It is very interesting to note that the member opposite who is asking these questions was the Minister of Justice back in the last Sitting of the Legislative Assembly, back when the RCMP have acknowledged that these allegations began. As members opposite keep on asking what was known and when, we know that we have put forth independent reviews. The Child and Youth Advocate has also put forth an independent review, and so has the RCMP, and all these questions will be answered.

As far as the question about confidence, I have said it before, and I will say it again: I absolutely have confidence in every single minister on this team.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed. We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 236

Clerk: Motion No. 236, standing in the name of Mr. Dixon.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition:

THAT the Government does not have the confidence of this House and the people of Yukon.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise and speak to this motion. I should note at the outset that I'll be the only speaker on behalf of the Official Opposition and I will speak to this now.

Let me start by saying that we did not arrive at tabling this motion lightly. A confidence motion is not something that I believe should be brought forward without substantial cause. I believe though that, when I look at the direction that the Yukon is currently heading on several important issues, I'm extremely concerned and that concern has culminated in this motion that we are discussing today.

It is my view that the current Liberal government has ignored the doctor shortage, ignored the teacher shortage, ignored the housing shortage, and continued to offer inadequate solutions to a growing list of issues that have been raised in this legislative Sitting, whether those issues are the ones that have been raised by the NDP regarding the growing mental health crisis in our communities, or the opioid crisis in our

communities, or issues that we have raised about the cost of energy and fuel wood, or other issues facing our health care system. The most concerning issue, however, has been the current government's handling of the Hidden Valley sexual abuse scandal.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the government has continued to ignore the parents and families of Hidden Valley, who have been looking for answers about the government's mishandling of this issue. Those Yukoners have had to frequently go to the media to express their concerns and exasperation. This failure, of course, eventually led to a majority of members in the Legislature voting in favour of having the Deputy Premier resign from Cabinet as a result of her not ensuring that parents were notified of this issue when she became aware of it.

As we know, letters were prepared by the department to notify parents and a briefing note was prepared for the minister.

When asked reasonable questions about these issues, the Deputy Premier and the current minister have refused to provide direct answers. Of course, the reason we are aware of all this is because of the reporting of local media, including the CBC, and documents revealed through access to information.

After the initial report, a lot more information has come out, including a timeline that the RCMP provided to parents on November 9 that indicates that issues at Hidden Valley may have gone back even further than we originally thought. Of course, this is concerning and demands that we immediately get answers for parents and for Yukoners. We need to know who knew what, when they knew, and what they did with the information when they received it. That is why, when I announced this confidence motion, I indicated that I would immediately launch a public inquiry that would look at everything from day one of this individual being hired by the Government of Yukon.

This, of course, would cover the period of time under the previous government as well as the period of time under the current government. On this, I am less concerned about who was in power than I am about the answers coming out. I am concerned about getting answers for parents, for children, and for Yukoners. They have waited long enough, Mr. Speaker. They are tired of being told that they need to wait for answers. They are tired of being told that they need to wait until the spring or until next year. A public inquiry is required now so that parents and Yukoners can get these answers.

I have heard directly from parents, and not just at Hidden Valley, over the course of the last several months who have been asking me how this could happen, asking me why parents would be kept in the dark, and asking me why we, as the Official Opposition, are not doing more to get answers for parents. Those have been tough conversations, Mr. Speaker.

As a parent myself, I am horrified at the reality that these types of things could happen in one of our schools and that this information could be kept from parents. How could this happen, Mr. Speaker, and why did this happen? That is why we are here discussing this today.

Parents have been clear that they want answers and are tired of waiting. It's time for accountability and those very answers, Mr. Speaker. No matter who was in government, no

matter when the decisions were made, it's time for those answers to come forward. That's how I arrived at this very difficult motion today. It was after hours and hours of difficult conversations, letters, e-mails, and correspondence from families and others. It was with the interests of the parents and children in mind.

I wish that we weren't here today being forced to discuss this, but we have to. We were elected to come to this House and make difficult decisions on behalf of Yukoners. We were elected to ensure that the decisions and actions of government are given the scrutiny. I feel that this is my role as Leader of the Official Opposition. It's my obligation to live up to that duty. When the government refuses to show accountability, that is how we get into the position we are in today.

Of course, as I mentioned, this House tried to make the government show accountability last month when it passed a motion with a majority of MLAs calling for the Deputy Premier to resign. Unfortunately, to date, the government has refused to respect that decision by the House. The obvious next step from that is a confidence motion.

This could have been avoided had the government respected the will of the Legislature or even if the government had launched a truly independent public inquiry into this, but they haven't. That is why I brought this confidence motion forward.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, confidence motions are a big deal. Sometimes they result in an election, but after three elections in this territory this year, I don't think anyone wants a fourth. When I arrived at the decision that the government needed to be held accountable, I wanted to ensure that we could get answers for Yukoners and that we could get answers for parents without forcing another election.

We know that constitutional convention — especially when we are in such close proximity to a recent election — allows for the Commissioner to look to the Legislature to determine if anyone else can command the confidence of the Legislature if a government were to lose confidence. So, I began to determine how, if the government were to lose to confidence of the House, I would be able to make the legitimate case to the Commissioner that another election would not be necessary. That was when I was drawn to the comments of the Third Party leader last month after the House passed the motion about the Deputy Premier.

When asked by the media if the Third Party would vote non-confidence in the government, they indicated that they could not because the policy guarantees in the confidence and supply agreement that they have with the current government were too important to them and to Yukoners.

As you know, the confidence and supply agreement — or CASA, as we refer to it in the Legislature — is the arrangement between the Third Party and the governing party. It is the basis that the Premier used to go to the Commissioner to demonstrate that he command the confidence of the House earlier this year.

Naturally, I arrived at the conclusion that the CASA would be necessary in order to ensure that the Third Party would agree to provide us with confidence in the Legislature. Now, no Yukoner will be surprised to hear this, but there are many

policy items in the CASA that I do not like and that I have had strong words about. That much is clear, Mr. Speaker.

So, arriving at the offer of honouring the CASA was not done easily for me. I had to bring my own party on board and convince people that I, who have spent the last six months explaining why I disagree with the CASA, was now going to offer to support it. That was not easy, but I believe that it was the right course of action and worth the effort. It was worth it to make a serious offer and a serious compromise.

As I stated, the purpose of the confidence motion is with the motivation of getting answers and accountability for the parents and families of Hidden Valley, but if putting water in my wine and giving up what are significant policy concessions and agreeing to honour significant policies outlined in the CASA are necessary to deliver those answers and to deliver this accountability for families and bring about a change in government, then it was worth it to me.

To me, it was clear that Yukoners would want us to put our policy and personal differences aside to focus on this serious matter and a number of other serious shortcomings of the current government. Disagreements over rent caps or mining policy pale in comparison to accountability and answers.

So, I want to say that this offer and these significant concessions were not made lightly, and the decision to bring forward a confidence motion was not made lightly, either, but my motivation — our motivation as the Official Opposition — has always been to get accountability and answers — and recognizing our serious concerns to bring about change in government.

Today, we have the opportunity to get this accountability through our actions and our votes in the Legislature. We have the opportunity to indicate to parents that they have waited long enough for answers and for that accountability.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I will close my remarks and I look forward to hearing from my colleagues in the Legislature about this motion and, of course, encourage my colleagues to support it.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, in Canada, including in the provinces and territories, there are three branches of government. There is the executive branch, the judicial branch, and the legislative branch, and there is a division of power. The division of power is as follows: The judicial branch is the courts; the legislative branch is this House, and here we make the laws, pass budgets, and the opposition questions and criticizes the government, and that is their role; the executive branch, the government, is the decision-making branch of the public service and it executes the laws and budgets created here in the Legislature. The executive branch is headed up by the Premier and the Cabinet; the Cabinet is chosen by the Premier, and that is the division of power.

In Canada, and in the provinces and territories, the Legislative Assembly doesn't, and shouldn't, tell the courts what to do — that is not our role. Neither does the Legislative Assembly pick the Cabinet. These roles are divided. What the Legislative Assembly does do is decide if we, this House, has confidence in the government. A pretty standard test for

confidence is whether or not a budget bill passes the House. If it doesn't, the folks in government — the Premier and his or her Cabinet — typically step back. What happens next is that a different group of MLAs could step forward and say that they have the confidence of the House or, more often, the Commissioner would just call an election. The motion that we are debating today, brought forward by the Leader of the Yukon Party, is asking whether this House has confidence in the government.

With that just setting the stage, let me start with a few simple observations. The Leader of the Yukon Party has stated publicly — and again, just now, when he rose to speak to his motion, and also through a news release that I saw this Monday, I believe, although it may have been released over the weekend — that he and his party don't have confidence in the Liberal government. Well, when I think back to — it has been just about five years since we were sworn in, or we may be a couple of weeks shy of that five years. For the past five years, the Yukon Party has voted against every budget that we have presented. As I said, budgets are a way that you test the confidence of the House. Is it a breaking story that the members opposite don't have confidence in the government? No, not really.

It is the opposition's job to criticize. It's an honourable job. For the past five years, they have called on the Premier to shuffle ministers out or for ministers to resign. This is not the first time, but they know that the vote from four weeks ago — when opposition members voted for the Minister of Justice, the Deputy Premier, and the Minister of Health and Social Services to step down — was not a binding vote. In fact, the Leader of the Official Opposition said so on the radio just ahead of coming in here four weeks ago when we had this debate. As it states within the motion that led to today, it is an opinion of this House.

That opinion was shared with the Premier, and the Premier said, Thank you, no thanks. And now, the members opposite are saying, Okay — therefore, you are being disrespectful. Well, actually, this is how the division of power exists within our three branches, of how we organize our government, our democracy here in the territory. Okay, but what is right is that there can be a motion today to test the confidence of the House.

I think that the Leader of the Official Opposition, who is a pretty smart person, and who I believe has studied political science, is well aware of this. I think he is well aware that opinion was not binding, and I think that he brought forward the motion knowing that it would put pressure on the government, but why then, if the Official Opposition has always lacked confidence in the government through Question Period, through budgets, through the criticism that they supply, why are we at a confidence motion today and not sometime in the previous five years?

The answer, quite simply, Mr. Speaker, is that we are in a minority government.

This past spring in 2021, the election resulted in a minority. There were eight Yukon Party MLAs, there were three Third Party NDP MLAs, and there were eight Liberal MLAs. It is a minority government. With no party having a majority of the

seats, it's necessary to cooperate in order to ensure that some group of MLAs has the confidence of the House.

My perspective is that this is exactly what Yukoners chose. They did not confer a majority. Frankly, I think that we should be working constructively together way more often, but our system is designed to be pretty adversarial. There are days here that I think are tough on all members of this Legislative Assembly. It doesn't matter where you sit, there are days when I think we go home not thinking the best of what we have done, about ourselves.

I personally think that Yukoners expect and wish we would be more respectful and more constructive in how we work to represent them here in the Legislature, but, as I say, the system is set up to be adversarial. I believe that criticism is the appropriate and correct role; it's just that it can, and should, be done respectfully, and the response to that criticism can, and should, be done more respectfully.

I personally think minority governments have some advantages. It forces whoever is the government to work more cooperatively and more constructively with other members of the Legislature, but I will note that this does not make these governments easy. They are, in fact, hard. It's hard to maintain confidence in a system set up for criticism, and it's hard to provide confidence when you are also criticizing, especially in the adversarial system that we have.

As a small aside, I bet you today that the media is listening in more than they typically do, as they did four weeks ago, when we had the debate on the motion brought forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition regarding the Deputy Premier. Normally, we don't have that here at this time. After Question Period is done, usually the media steps aside. This House is a completely different place during Question Period and after Question Period. I'll make some comments on that when I close my remarks for this motion.

After the election this past spring, both the Liberals and the Yukon Party spoke with the New Democratic Party. I'm not privy to how that conversation went between the Yukon Party and the NDP, but I'm well aware, based on the conversation between the Premier and the Leader of the Third Party, that there was a confidence agreement that was signed. This agreement is established for a couple of years, and it has goals like: making democracy work for people; addressing climate change; creating jobs and building a sustainable economy that works for everyone; and more. By the way, Mr. Speaker, that agreement was made public right away. It's available up on our website and the Third Party's website; it's there for all to see.

Personally, I think these goals are ones we can and should get behind. I think it's important, and as the Premier just stated during Question Period to the last question that came from the Member for Lake Laberge, here we are in a pandemic. Since that election, we have hit our first, and now our second, wave. In the middle of that pandemic, I think it's important that there be strong leadership.

Through this agreement, the New Democratic Party reserved the right to be critical of other government legislation and policies. That is part of the agreement that is spelled out. They also agreed to supply confidence to the government in

exchange for a range of policy priorities, as laid out in the agreement. Over the weekend, the Yukon Party put out a press release — maybe it was posted on Monday, but the date on it, I think, is from Sunday. I am going to talk about that press release. I think it will reflect the comments that I've heard from the Leader of the Official Opposition today.

In response to that press release, the Leader of the Third Party put out a statement as well. She indicated through that statement, and through media that I listened to on Monday, I think, that she is critical of us as the government and also indicated that she and her NDP colleagues would continue to uphold the confidence agreement. I think that's what we will debate today, but this is exactly what I think we agreed to, which is that the Third Party would reserve the right to criticize while also working together on specific policies to improve the lives of Yukoners.

The Yukon Party has brought a confidence motion, because this is a minority government. They didn't in the previous five years, even though they have had criticism throughout, but they have brought the motion today.

There was something that I found telling within the Leader of the Official Opposition's comments. He emphasized the inquiries around Hidden Valley school, but he also stated that it was to bring about a change in government. I think that the Yukon Party would like to be in charge. I actually don't think that there is anything wrong with wanting to lead the territory, but there are some things here in this motion that are incongruent and odd, and I am going to talk about those things.

As I have already stated, if this motion passes, the outcome is either an election or the Yukon Party and the NDP would need to work together.

Here is my first surprise: It's not that there is a confidence agreement; it's not that the Official Opposition is critical of us — that is their job — but it is that the Yukon Party — and the Leader of the Official Opposition has just stated it again — would honour the existing Liberal and New Democratic Party confidence agreement. That's quite a headline. The Yukon Party is claiming that we are not fit to govern, and they offer to endorse a raft of policies that they have disagreed with. Okay — and that is to gain political power.

There is a range of policies: minimum wage at \$15.20; rent freeze; 45-percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions — I'm excited, personally, to learn that the Yukon Party is now supportive of successor legislation, the upcoming clean energy act, accelerated land use planning, paid sick leave, the safe supply of opioids — those are great things. It is surprising to me, but it is, I guess, welcome news that the Yukon Party has stood up and stated this both here today in the Legislature and through their press release.

If we turn back to four weeks ago, and in listening to the Leader of the Official Opposition in his opening remarks, this has all evolved from the cases of sexual abuse at Hidden Valley school. As we all work to address this awful situation, we state, as I raise this topic, that our priority needs to be protecting the health and well-being of our children. I think our hearts go out to the families at Hidden Valley school.

We now know, from the investigations that are underway, from the inquiries that are in place, that the abuse was first reported in 2015.

When this legislative Sitting started this fall — when the fall session started — at first the Leader of the Official Opposition stated publicly — because he can't say it here in the Legislature, Mr. Speaker; you can't call someone a liar here. But the Leader of the Official Opposition called the Minister of Education a liar because the Minister of Education said that she didn't know about the cases of sexual abuse. What we did know about was the case from 2019. The then-Minister of Education knew about it, reported it to the RCMP, and did all the right steps in that moment. Subsequent to that, something happened where the investigation didn't go as it was supposed to have gone, and we are working to find that out and to get those answers for the families.

The Minister of Education, the past Minister of Education, the Deputy Minister of Education, and the RCMP superintendent have all stood up and apologized that there clearly was a mistake made and that we would work to address those mistakes, whatever they are, to put in place inquiries, investigations, and reviews to find where that happened and to make sure that whatever the findings are, wherever they go, we would follow those recommendations, and we have four of those inquiries underway right now. In fact, the one from the RCMP — the one that is being led, I think, by the external review group from the RCMP — it is the group that came out and said to us all that the 2015 incident of abuse had been reported, but it didn't get followed up at the time. So, it is important that we look backward in time and find out what happened.

After the Leader of the Official Opposition claimed that the current Minister of Education was lying and then the Minister of Education said, no, she was not aware of the cases — we had all been aware of the first case that got reported to the RCMP, but she was not aware of the additional cases. Then, the Leader of the Official Opposition said, well, the problem wasn't the Minister of Education, it was the past Minister of Education and asked for that Minister of Education to resign through a motion four weeks ago.

Now we find out that the abuse started in 2015 under his government, but we haven't switched now. It's not that, okay, that's the problem back then. In fact, I looked at what the Leader of the Official Opposition said and how he responded to the media — at least, I'm now referring to some tweets that were, I think, between him but certainly between his party and the media, asking about what was known. The answer was that the minister and the government didn't know; the MLAs didn't know. Okay, great.

That's exactly what the past Minister of Education stated — that we were not aware and were not made aware of these additional cases. We understand that something broke down with the RCMP. We know that, and we have four investigations underway.

So, all right, the answer from the Leader of the Official Opposition is, from his perspective, all right, but all the blame and all the assumption still lies here — in fact, enough

assumption that what he is saying is that we should switch governments.

Now, let's just talk about the reviews that are underway, because what the Leader of the Official Opposition is saying is that he supports the confidence agreement in order to get at an investigation for Hidden Valley Elementary School. We have four of them underway right now.

I'm not sure what the plan is. Let's say that the confidence motion is successful today; let's say that the Official Opposition is able to secure the support of the Third Party; let's say that we don't go to an election; and let's say that they form the government. Okay, we're going to get to a public inquiry. Will they throw away the work that is underway right now with these four investigations?

Because they are providing us information as we speak. They are also, I hope, trying to be sensitive and respectful to the fact that we have ongoing cases and investigations — active investigations. I say again, as I said four weeks ago, that we would never do this in this Legislature at other times because we would be worried that we are compromising those active cases right now.

But I didn't call this motion; we didn't call this motion. We will respectfully debate it, but whatever the investigations are, I sure hope that they respect the active work that is ongoing right now by the RCMP. I have not heard us talk about that, but I think that it's critical because I wouldn't want to, through our earnestness, hurt these kids and these families more.

But we have four investigations underway right now. Now, I've heard the members opposite refer to them as a "sham" in this House. Then today, I have heard him refer to some of those same investigations and inquiries in a completely different light. Personally, I think that they are all important.

So, just to be clear, the Yukon Party's suggestion for a solution is that they become the government so they can launch an inquiry. We have four of them underway, as we speak. The RCMP inquiry is the one that led to the information that this abuse started earlier than was understood — when we were first informed of it in 2019 and turned it over to the RCMP immediately.

By the way, we have an example from just over the last two days of another issue that was raised to us, and the current Minister of Education did exactly the same thing as the past Minister of Education, which was to immediately elevate it because it has the potential of a crime and elevated it to the RCMP.

I listened to the Child and Youth Advocate on the radio this morning talking about how it is important that this had happened. It is important that she is going to follow along in behind to make sure that there are supports for the families. I am sure that it is hard, but that is what I understand to have happened in 2019, but let us get to the bottom of it.

So, the Official Opposition says: Hey, make us the government. We will get to the bottom of it.

Meanwhile, I don't know what would happen with the four investigations that are underway. We have an independent investigator, Amanda Rogers — that is ongoing right now. She is meeting with families, talking to them, and hearing their

concerns. She is reaching across departments, going back in time, looking to see whether there were missteps that were made by government or the RCMP, how the system could have allowed this to happen, and what we need to do to get it right.

We have the Child and Youth Advocate doing an investigation, and we have the Information and Privacy Commissioner carrying out an investigation. I am not sure which of these the members opposite think are not independent. I mean, they have said that the Amanda Rogers investigation is not independent, but they probably have not said it to her face.

I hope that the Yukon Party will cooperate with the RCMP, Amanda Rogers, the independent investigator, the Child and Youth Advocate, and the Information and Privacy Commissioner around all of these, because I think that we all want to support children and families of Hidden Valley school.

So, this is a confidence motion that is initiated around deeply concerning and serious sexual abuse of children. Now we know that it started in 2015 — or that is the current information that we have — but the four independent investigations — and the Yukon Party's suggestion is that we launch an independent public inquiry. This is a confidence motion criticizing a confidence agreement that the Yukon Party is wanting to endorse if it is with them.

I am going to talk for a moment about several other reasons that the Yukon Party gave in their press release about why they feel that we, as a government, are not doing a good job leading the public.

The first one was around energy. Today, I stood up on a ministerial statement, and we talked about the grid-scale battery. I heard that they thought that was right. In fact, I have listened to a lot of their ideas around energy. I do think it's important to listen to perspectives that come from all sides. The one I just completely disagree with: Their idea around energy is to build a diesel energy plant. That, for me, is flat-out wrong. We had the witnesses from the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation sitting here. They told all of us, the members of this Legislature, that it is ever so slightly cheaper to rent diesels than it is to buy them. Of course, if you buy them, if you build a plant, you also have this disincentivization toward renewables. So, for all reasons, I believe this to be wrong, but that is their argument.

They said that we are not doing well with energy, and they said that we are not doing well with housing. I think it is fair to say that there is a lot of housing pressure out there. The minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation held a housing summit about a month ago — maybe a month and a half ago. I thought to myself: Okay, let me look nationally. Let's see what's going on, because when COVID hit back in March of last year, things changed quite a bit. I looked up the Canadian Real Estate Association and I saw that, from February of 2020 to October of 2021, Yukon housing prices had gone up by a whopping 16 percent. Then I checked what it is across Canada. The answer is 32 percent.

During COVID, housing prices have gone up across the country, including here in the Yukon — luckily not as much here in the Yukon. It's still a challenge. We need to address it, but to try to suggest that, as a government, this shows a lack of

leadership is kind of glossing over some stuff. If the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation gets up on this motion, I would like to hear him on this topic.

Another one I am going to speak about is the shortage of professionals and in particular the doctor shortage. It was raised again in Question Period today — I wish I had the Blues already. It was an interesting response. I heard the Minister of Health and Social Services talk about the differences in the number of doctors here compared to the date when the *Putting People First* report analysis was done — I think from 2015 to today. I think I heard something about a 25-percent increase — from 60 to 77 percent or something like that, but it was a significant increase — and yes, we also have a doctor shortage right now.

I believe that this shortage — and I've heard the minister talk about it — goes across the country. I looked across the country. I am just looking at 2021 articles, and in BC, there's a family doctor shortage impacting 911 service and ambulance waits. There is a family doctor shortage in Alberta. A doctor shortage is becoming a health care crisis in southern Alberta. One says that we really need to fill that void; rural Alberta municipalities are struggling with doctor shortages. With Saskatchewan, a national report looks at doctor and nurse shortages and has some specifics about Saskatchewan. Manitoba has a huge problem. Doctors in Manitoba called for action on a massive and growing backlog in the medical system. Ontario, Québec — I'm going to talk about Nova Scotia for a second, but I have some from every jurisdiction across the country.

In Nova Scotia, they had an election this summer. One of the main topics of their election was a doctor shortage. In May, they had 65,000 people who were on the wait-list for doctors. That is 6.5 percent. Our wait-list is 2,500, which is six percent. Their wait-list is higher than ours. That was in May. They had an election. The incoming Conservative government said that they were going to fix this problem. I am sure that is what they are trying to do. I am not trying to cast a shadow on their hard work to address this problem. I looked at an article from about one month ago today, and that wait-list has jumped from 65,000 in Nova Scotia to 78,000. It has gone from 6.5 percent to eight percent. That's with a government that ran on and got elected on addressing the doctor shortage.

The point I'm trying to make is that there is a challenge across this country, and it is not really surprising. We don't have to look very far to understand what that challenge is: It's a doctor shortage — sorry, it's COVID. COVID has put this pressure on our professions and on our labour force.

Just one last reference — I saw an article that was with the *National Post*, and the article was entitled *Canada doesn't know how bad its doctor shortage is, let alone how to fix it*. In that article, who did I read, who was there being interviewed but Dr. Katharine Smart, the head of the Canadian Medical Association, talking about the challenges with doctors across the country. I happen to know that the Minister of Health and Social Services is working with her colleagues across this country to try to find ways to improve recruitment and retention

nationally and how we can work together as jurisdictions to try to address this national problem.

I also heard from the members opposite that they criticize us as a government for not supporting doctors and say that we should be doing more. When I listen to the minister respond, she says: Yes, we should be doing more, and then lists off what more is being done.

From this Monday — and I'm now quoting from Hansard. This is the Minister of Health and Social Services — and I quote: “We have doubled the bursary program since the last number of years to help with medical professionals and our recruitment and retention of those individuals who are being educated in medical professions. I can indicate that we have not cancelled the recruitment position. We are working with the Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Medical Association...”

So, yes, we are working to address this issue. The members opposite — it is their job to criticize us and say that we're not supportive of doctors. In the meantime, they have stated, up to one week ago, that they disagree with our chief doctor here, and the comments made by Dr. Warshawski on CBC, saying that what we really need is a vaccine mandate. The members opposite say: Sorry, we don't agree with that, but what I hear is that we don't support what the doctors are telling us. Again, I am struck by the confidence motion that is brought before us, which is to say: We would like to be in government; we support doctors — except not when we don't.

So, on all of those fronts, in the press release that the Leader of the Official Opposition put out, there is this message of: We don't have confidence in this government, but we would be happy to sign the confidence agreement with the Third Party.

I think that it was on October 18 when the Minister of Health and Social Services stood up in this Legislature and talked, through a ministerial statement, about the COVID-19 vaccine and safety measures. That day, the Leader of the Official Opposition stood up and he said that was fake news. He said something along the lines that we were trying to avoid conversations on Hidden Valley Elementary School.

Up until that day, we had 20 times — sorry, well, 60 times, because each time the minister rises, she rises three times to respond to questions — had risen — I will have to go back and count to be absolutely sure, but let us say 60 times, to answer questions about Hidden Valley Elementary School — talking about it, going to Hidden Valley, meeting with parents, having the deputy minister go, having the superintendent of the RCMP go, and setting up these inquiries to try to address things, to get to those answers, trying to protect the ongoing criminal investigations that are underway.

But the Leader of the Official Opposition said that this was some sort of conspiracy and that the Minister of Health and Social Services was talking about a vaccine mandate because she was trying to draw focus away from Hidden Valley school. Yet, within a couple of weeks, this COVID wave hit. We redeclared a state of emergency. What we were doing was listening to the doctors who are advising us. These are hard choices. Leadership is tough; the role of government is tough; the role of opposition is tough — it's tough, but these are the

leadership choices. Members opposite have accused us of not taking leadership, not taking a tough stand. Here we are, standing up, taking a tough stand, happy to take the criticism, happy to say that we are following the advice of our health specialists — the doctors, the nurse practitioners, epidemiologists, those whose job it is to give us health advice.

I'm going to wrap up here in a second, Mr. Speaker. When the Leader of the Official Opposition put forward his press release to talk about how he was going to bring forward this motion of confidence that we are debating today, he said — and he said again when he stood today — that they would honour the confidence agreement. So, this is about — because it is all so strange to me — a lack of confidence here, but they are willing to give confidence to the Third Party. I hope that the Leader of the Third Party will stand and I look forward to hearing her comments. I anticipate that she should criticize us as government because that is the role. I heard her say, by the way, that it's a tough job. I appreciate that. I will also say that leading in a pandemic is a tough job.

But what made my head spin was — I saw the press release from the Official Opposition saying that they wanted to support the Third Party. I saw that the Third Party said: Sorry, no thank you. And then we got to Question Period that day — this past Monday. Do you recall it, Mr. Speaker? That day, I heard the Leader of the Official Opposition —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Member for Lake Laberge, on a point of order.

Mr. Cathers: Members have been cautioned many times in this House — most recently, I believe, was yesterday — not to involve the Chair in debate. The Chair is, of course, supposed to be independent and not drawn into debate by members, as the Minister of Community Services just did.

Speaker: The Government House Leader, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I apologize. I will be very careful not to involve the Speaker in my comments.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Government House Leader, I accept your apology. Please continue.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: So, my recollection of Monday — just backing up again and setting the stage — is that the Yukon Party reached out to the Third Party and put out a press release saying that they would honour the confidence agreement, which they had been pretty critical of here. I seem to recall the Leader of the Official Opposition calling it the most left-leaning government that he has seen in his lifetime — although there have been NDP governments here in his lifetime, but that is his opinion; fine. Then he said: We will honour that confidence agreement with you. The Leader of the Third Party said: No, thank you. Then, during Question Period, I listened as the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, and the Member for Lake Laberge stood up during

Question Period and attacked the Third Party for having a confidence agreement.

How do you do that? How do you do that? How do you say: Hey, we're with you?

I thought the response and statement from the Leader of the Third Party was respectful. It was: No, thanks. There was criticism there too, of course, but it was: No, thanks.

It felt like a schoolyard. There are times when I feel like that's how this House conducts itself. In fact, there are times when I feel that the way in which we work together would not be tolerated in a schoolyard. It's amazing to me.

What I was hoping for when I listened to the Leader of the Official Opposition — there was the one thing that they would do as a government, and that is to get to a public inquiry. I have noted here that we have four inquiries underway. Maybe the Official Opposition thinks that they are the wrong inquiries. What I thought he would do is talk about why he wishes to be government. What are the things that he would propose? What's his vision for the Yukon?

We, on our side, have been talking about — and working on and delivering on — renewable energy and *Our Clean Future*. This past summer, Community Services and the folks at wildland fire responded to the biggest flood that we have had from Lake Laberge to Bennett. That is active work.

We have rolled out a new program for early learning and childcare. I am really happy to see the other provinces get on board now. That's work that is happening.

We have had *Putting People First* happening. During the second motion that will be coming later today, we will be talking about a clinic here in Whitehorse and work to try to provide services across the territory for health and wellness.

I heard the Premier reference our GDP. We just heard the numbers the other day that the Yukon was only one of two jurisdictions to have GDP growth last year. We were double the other jurisdiction, which was Nunavut, I believe. So, only Nunavut and the Yukon had GDP growth. I have not heard that talked about in the media.

This is the work that we are doing. It's good work; it's important work. The most important work that we are doing — and the hardest work that we are doing — is addressing a pandemic. It has not been easy.

We brought in hard choices that showed leadership, including border security — which, I heard from the members opposite, was not the right thing; it was done wrong, and yet, in the end, I think it reflects that the Yukon did well with these things. Again, I want to thank everyone who — in partnership with First Nation governments, municipal governments, and our bylaw folks — stood up to do this hard work, including the work that is ongoing today. That's what I think of as leadership.

I'm going to finish off, Mr. Speaker — it is not surprising to me that the Yukon Party is bringing forward a motion to say that they don't have confidence. As I've said, I don't think that they have ever had confidence in us as a government. They have stood and said that they are critical at all times. They have voted against every budget bill that we brought forward. This is not surprising. This is not really news.

They are coming forward now, and I think that it's because they wish to form government and we're in a minority situation, so we'll see what happens.

But here is something that might be a little bit different for folks who are listening — to Yukoners who care about this and are listening in. This fall, we have had 15 recorded votes here in this Legislature. These always happen after Question Period in the time when people are not listening as much. Of the 15 votes, 11 of them have been unanimous across all parties. Two of them have been with the Yukon Party voting alone, and two of them have been us, as a Liberal government, voting alone. That's closer to what goes on here after Question Period. It doesn't make the news. It's not very headline-worthy. I'm sure if I stood up today and swore or did something like that, then it would make the news, but that's not the point. The point is that we are supposed to be leading this territory. I don't mean just "we", as in the Liberals; I mean that this Legislature is supposed to be leading the territory. We're supposed to be respectful of the division of power. If we are to be the government, we need to show the confidence of this House.

I appreciate the opportunity to stand to talk through these things and to point out that it's strange that the Yukon Party is now saying that they are supportive of the confidence agreement.

I look forward to their continued support on that, because now that they have given it, they might take it back. I am a little worried about that, because I saw what happened on Monday, in Question Period, when they went after the Third Party, but I will hopefully hear their support for these important initiatives for Yukoners.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise here to respond to Motion No. 236, that the government does not have the confidence of this House and the people of the Yukon. I am opposed to this motion. I am opposed to it for a number of reasons.

Responding to this motion, Mr. Speaker, among other points, I will reflect on the collective goals of this government, as well as the goals and targets as set out in my mandate letter. Yukoners have seen the work that has been done already by this government in such a short time to create real change in our communities, which is impacting Yukoners every day. For example, we have been able to work together to make advancements on what I believe is the biggest challenge that Yukoners face today — climate change.

Currently, the Yukon has some of the most ambitious climate targets in the country, and we are well on our way to meeting them. We have an opportunity to engage with young climate leaders in our community, investing \$13 million for building energy projects and retrofits, helping Yukoners purchase electric vehicles through rebates, and beginning to implement various plastic bans, but there is so much work to do on this file alone. We cannot afford to lose the momentum that we have on this file, as we are seeing increasingly severe weather events, such as the unprecedented flooding that we saw this summer in the Yukon or the infrastructure and flooding crisis that British Columbia is dealing with today.

Looking across at the members opposite, I ask myself: Where do that party's values actually lie, with respect to climate change — notwithstanding the apparent "come to whoever your spiritual leader is at the moment" today with respect to the confidence and supply agreement?

I know that, in their last platform, they offered to invest in a new LNG generator in Whitehorse, furthering the city's reliance on fossil fuels. I know that, in the past, without any foresight, the Yukon Party leader himself said that he did not think that the territory-wide emission targets were the right thing to do. Mr. Speaker, this is the type of leadership that Yukoners cannot afford to have.

When I reflect on some of the other work we have been able to do with our partners in the Third Party — although we do not always share the same vision, we have been able to compromise to deliver results for our communities — progressive actions, such as the safe consumption site that recently opened in Whitehorse, which is literally saving lives as we speak, and coverage for presumptive cancers for firefighters, which will make a difference in the lives of those who work to protect us. We recognize, of course, that there are bumps in the road with respect to those discussions, but that's the development of a mature and productive working relationship — minimum wage increases that have come into effect in the territory and that are helping Yukoners pay their bills or, in fact, the newly established Climate Leadership Council — these are all things that would not have been done in a partnership with a Yukon Party government.

Even the Leader of the Third Party said on CBC yesterday that, although the Leader of the Yukon Party says now that they would put their support behind CASA, a few short months ago, the agreement was too radical, and there was no common ground to be found. The Yukon Party's position today with respect to their warm embrace of the confidence and supply agreement in all of its terms and conditions, Mr. Speaker, strains credulity.

Competent and responsible leaders look for common ground, because that is what we are here to do. We are here to work together for Yukoners and provide results that impact their lives in a positive way. The Leader of the Official Opposition and his colleagues from across the floor have expressed that they do not have confidence in our leadership. As my colleague, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, so ably set out in his comments over the last half-hour to 40 minutes, that is not unique. In some respects, it is the job of the members opposite to ask the tough questions, to question policies and programs, and to present an alternative. It is not unique that they don't have confidence in the government. What the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources pointed out quite succinctly is that we are in the first minority situation that the Yukon territorial government has been in for the better part of 30 years.

On the topic of confidence, for one thing, on one topic, I'm not certain that we have confidence that the Leader of the Official Opposition truly did discipline the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin and the Member for Kluane with respect to their lewd and offensive texting in advance of our spring session this year.

He promised Yukoners that the members would take the appropriate training, yet we have yet to see any indication that such training or counselling has actually occurred. One thing I can tell you is that Yukoners care about how we treat each other. It is in our core values as a community that we treat each other with respect, and when mistakes are made, we own up to them, and although the Member for Kluane delivered a heartfelt tribute against bullying recently, the Yukon Party never directly owned up to their actions and inappropriate comments, and to me, that is a reflection of faulty leadership or of the Leader of the Official Opposition.

I also think back to what occurred in this Assembly just a few short weeks ago. The Yukon Party tabled a petition, organized by a former Yukon Party staffer, which urged the government to ignore the advice of the acting chief medical officer of health's recommendation and abolish vaccine mandates. As you heard in the response to the petition, as we all heard, it was riddled with fake names, duplicates, and even, as we heard at the time, the name of a white supremacist who killed 51 people at a mosque in New Zealand in 2019. This type of irresponsible action has no place in the position of leadership in our territory and, to be frank, puts the health and safety of all Yukoners at risk.

Instead of fomenting further division and fear, we need leaders in our territory who unite Yukoners and reassure them in this critical and challenging time. Whether it be the climate crisis that we are facing or an unprecedented global pandemic, we know that it is only through our collective actions that we will be able to address these problems that we all face today.

Today, among various strategies employed, Mr. Dixon has

— **Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Point of order, Official Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Highways and Public Works referred to another member by name, and, of course, that is against the Standing Orders. I would ask you to have the member withdraw it.

Speaker: On the point of order, the Minister of Highways and Public Works.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, that is consistent with the Standing Orders, and I retract those comments and will certainly make best efforts to identify the members opposite by either their area of responsibility or their position within the House or their riding. Thank you.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Apology accepted.
Minister of Highways and Public Works, continue.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, we have heard about the awful child sex abuse scandal at Hidden Valley Elementary School, which is a subject of various investigations. The Leader of the Official Opposition's strategy is to bring that child sex abuse scandal to the forefront, arguably for his own political

gain. However, it does appear now, from the RCMP timeline, that the concerns with respect to the accused and ultimately convicted person at Hidden Valley Elementary School started in 2015-16, a time when the Leader of the Official Opposition has conceded, of course, that the Yukon Party was the governing party in the territory and when the Leader of the Official Opposition was a minister in that Cabinet, as were the majority of the currently sitting members of the Yukon Party.

He has stated, and I take him at his word — but he says that it is now important to get to the facts.

Of course, it is vital to get to the facts, but it may also be instructive to him that it may not have been the best strategy to debate this exhaustively on the floor of the Legislature while the various inquiries are occurring. We shall see.

Today, the Leader of the Official Opposition has brought a confidence motion in an attempt to send Yukoners back to the polls for the fourth time this year, as it is his view that Yukoners have lost confidence in this government. As I stated previously, majority governments were the rule rather than the exception in the Yukon for three decades, so motions of non-confidence were not viable because they weren't going to go anywhere.

Today, we are presented with an alternative. With former ministers who enjoy cracking jokes about genitalia as long as they are not caught, having a government endorse anti-vaxxer ideology, having a leader who has leveraged tragedies for his own political gain, and having a governing party that doesn't take climate change seriously, I firmly believe that this isn't the kind of leadership that the Third Party wants to work with, and I know that this isn't the leadership that Yukoners expect to have.

The Leader of the Third Party was clear about her experience working in the shadow of a Yukon Party government between 2011 and 2016, noting that the Yukon Party wasn't honest and willing to work with people when they were in government.

Returning to the confidence and supply agreement, I am certainly appreciative of the spirit of cooperation that I have established with the Member for Whitehorse Centre on the *Our Clean Future* implementation committee. I respect her strong commitment to apply a social justice lens in her decision-making on this committee.

How this government works with the Third Party is a critical piece of how we can measure the performance of this government. We are the responsible stewards of the Yukon. As I mentioned previously, I see a motion of confidence as the opportunity to highlight to Yukoners why our government deserves their hard-earned confidence.

We have much more work to do to support Yukoners, and I look forward to collaborating with the Third Party to accomplish this work. I agree with the Leader of the Third Party, who said yesterday on CBC that this government's relationship with the Third Party has not always been sunshine and rainbows, but I can advise that it is far better than the perfect storm that would come with the Yukon Party.

Our parties have been able to establish a responsible minority government with an agreement on a vision that we can share. There is no doubt that navigating that agreement is

complex and is an ongoing effort that requires hard work, Mr. Speaker. We certainly anticipate that, going forward, there will not be insignificant challenges.

There are still issues that we do not agree on, but unlike the Yukon Party, we know that there is a pathway forward that we can take together to benefit the lives of Yukoners. I look forward to making real changes that impact our territory now and for future generations. I look forward to continuing to build stronger communities that we can all be proud of. I look forward to serving Yukoners and creating a territory that we can continue to be proud to call home.

In closing, we would clearly be going backwards, or worse, if Mr. Dixon's and his colleagues' vision prevails.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, once again, the former Speaker, the Minister of Highways and Public Works, has referred to a member of this Legislature by name. He has apologized once. I would ask that he retract that and get him to apologize for a second time.

Speaker: Minister of Highways and Public Works, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure if I apologized the first time, but if I did not, I will, and, of course, I will be more careful going forward. The rebuke is noted.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: At this point, I am going to rebuke you and you need to be more careful with your remarks and your statements. Please continue, Minister of Highways and Public Works.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I will be careful.

We are the responsible stewards of the Yukon, and we will continue to exemplify the steady, hard-working leadership that Yukoners can be proud of. I will not be supporting this motion today. I know that supporting Yukoners is the most important thing that we can do right now in this challenging time, and I look forward to continuing to work and advocate on their behalf.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I thank the House for the opportunity to speak to this today. I rise to speak to Motion No. 236, put forth by the Yukon Party, that the government does not have the confidence of the House and the people of the Yukon. As you can imagine, Mr. Speaker, even saying that — reading out the motion — is certainly a gut-punch when you are in a position to have spent the last five years with your colleagues each and every day, getting up to do your very best in the responsibilities that you have. In looking back and reflecting on that, taking into consideration that there has been significant progress and accomplishments through those efforts, it becomes a really hard morning when you wake up and come to

this Assembly and the first thing that you think about is the debate that you are going to have where inevitably, because of political ideology or political parties seeing opportunity, they essentially wash away with their words the work that has been accomplished and position a particular argument in a way that is going to further their political interests.

I think that it is important to point out, as was pointed out by my colleague, that this vote that we are having today and that has really stirred up interest — both with Yukoners and with the media — will not be the last confidence vote that we have. Hopefully, today, we will be in a position to continue on our good work, but I would guess that every time we come back into this Assembly for a Sitting, whether it be in the spring or the fall, there will be a reason that is built to state that there is not confidence.

As my colleague reflected on the history of the last five years, we have never had support for our financial bills and, in many cases, we have not had support for our bigger strategies either. So, this is something that people on this side of the House, as long as we are in government, should get used to. It is going to come. There will always be an eloquent speech that is given and a justification for why the government should change or fall. I want to put that on the record today. No matter how good things are going — no matter how many things are accomplished, I might add — that will be the case.

Since announcing the 2021 confidence and supply agreement between the Yukon Liberal caucus and the NDP caucus, the Yukon Party leader has, on countless occasions, announced his displeasure with its contents, and now we have seen an about-face — stating publicly, in a news release put out by the Yukon Party caucus, that they had offered the NDP support for CASA for the duration of the agreement. Now, of course, as my colleagues have stated, we are happy to see that about-face. We are happy to see that the many items put into CASA that the Yukon Party — through deliberation in their caucus, through conversations with their leader, through a dialogue about what's best for Yukoners — has come to a place to understand that they could live with the elements of that agreement. They could last Friday. They could live with the items that we have worked on with the NDP. I think that this is something that's very significant, especially when we think about the criticism that was tabled publicly over and over again at the start of the Sitting and through the summer about the agreement that we had in place.

These agreements are always difficult to work through. I think about the positions that I have had as an MLA and as a minister. I think that it is pretty widely known that if there is somebody in this caucus or in this Cabinet who probably leans fairly far — if we want to talk about leaning — to the right, that's me. So, at times, you certainly have to go through the elements of this agreement, and you try to find common ground and try to debate on the other points.

But I think the one key item that I would say is that, as we went through the deliberations of this and we looked at the elements of the agreement, we came to a real understanding that there was some common ground. It notes that the Yukon Liberals and the Yukon NDP campaigned on policy proposals

that included points of agreement across multiple themes and five categories. One was to make democracy work for people. I think, as much as the Third Party probably also has challenges coming to the table with us, inevitably we were committed to making sure that democracy should work for people.

Addressing climate change and protecting the environment — I think that's a key one. When we think about our emissions in the Yukon, we think about transportation, and we think about our use of energy. I think when we think about, number two, addressing climate change, we could find common ground with the Third Party, but there was a drastic difference between where the Yukon Party positioned the argument around energy and where we did in the last election, only a few months back.

What we saw from the Yukon Party side was that they would build a very large thermal plant — a diesel plant — thought that was a good investment. My experience has been, working with federal counterparts, that there is not a lot of funding programs right now to build new diesel plants, so you're essentially going out and either borrowing money, or you're going to put it on the ratepayer.

The second thing that was stated during the election was that the renewable energy plan, which we were commending today, with a battery project — we touched on the wind project on Haeckel Hill, and we've all commended the Vuntut Gwitchin government for their new solar project. There was another project announced today and highlighted around another north Klondike Highway solar project — all of these things that were part of the renewable 10-year strategy. That strategy, of course, was also supported — not in the beginning — but was supported during the election.

So, we had a new \$80-million to \$90-million — maybe, with supply chain issues, even more — \$100-million — diesel plant. We had the entire renewable energy strategy which, coming into office, didn't exist. We were doing diesel and there was a little bit of renewable. The previous government could not get in place the IPP, which essentially is the mechanism that we're using now for all of these solar projects to feed into our grid. That policy work couldn't get completed.

No matter what was being said publicly about renewable energy, there was not even a mechanism to buy the renewable energy from someone. That is the first piece that we had to do. The second was to go back to the drawing board and build an entire 10-year strategy. That was completed. Then again today, we are talking about the actual fruits of that labour, and those are the projects that everyone is commending.

In a short period of time — 36 months or 48 months — that is the work. Compare and contrast: What we had on the other side was that we would see a new diesel plant being built. As I stated, we would be in a very difficult place to try to get money from any source other than borrowing or using the money that we have in our transfer agreement or from ratepayers to pay for that. Second, we were still going to build out the entire renewable, so that comes down to your capacity within your organization and your financial capacity — all of those many, many things. Third, we were going to freeze rates. Don't worry, we are going to freeze rates. Your rates are not going to go up. We are going to do what we did before. We are going to spend

for five years. We are not going to bring it to you. You are not going to have to worry about it. We are just going to put it over here on the government credit card, and then we're going to show up later and give you one big massive bill.

What I hear day in and day out in this Assembly is how the opposition is going to make it more affordable for Yukoners. Well, guess what? I don't know how budgeting was done at everyone's table here, but I can tell you that not leveraging the credit card and then putting it on people's backs five years later is probably a more reasonable and feasible way for us to conduct our business with Yukon Energy Corporation. If there is a cost — and there is a cost; there's not a territory or province in this country that is not going to have to build more energy. We have population growth, and we have growth in many different sectors. You try to do it with as little an impact as possible, but putting it in a box and thinking it's going away is not where you want to be, from a leadership perspective.

Again, I think that doesn't exude confidence. I believe that the positions and the things that we have done here are things that certainly have shown leadership, even when you have to have the tough conversation about why you are making those decisions.

So, again, I have seen it — it seems to be a very big tack and movement here around decisions and planning. Some of the other conversation points that were made or some of the public statements that were made by members across were:

"We know that the Liberals are letting the NDP co-write the new mining legislation and that it will be completed within 16 months. We know that the last time the Liberals let the NDP write policy for them, it turned into a disastrous rent control policy that one local economist has said is further left wing than Bernie Sanders."

That is a pretty strong statement that was made by members opposite, but again, they have reconciled that this policy position was okay last Friday.

You have to take into consideration where we are right now. We are being called on that there is no confidence in this team and that we should step down. At the same time, last week, we see a brand-new political party come out and be announced — a political party that is, you know — maybe there are people who are former members from the NDP; maybe there are former members or people who supported the Liberal Party, who have joined the Freedom Party, but the individuals I have talked to who joined the Freedom Party were all former members and supporters of the Yukon Party. Those folks are not just getting in there and supporting it, but they are actually financing, helping to put money in place.

We all have many friends of different political persuasions in the Yukon — it is a small community — so, I think that we also have to take that into consideration. We are being told over here that there is no confidence in us, and at the same time, the party that wants to take over has a splinter group coming out for the first time I have seen happen in five years and are starting to build their own — a second — conservative political party. I think that Yukoners have to reflect on that and take into consideration what that means. I don't know; I will leave that

to the opposition to work that out with their members, or their past members, whatever it may be.

Today, the things that we are taking into consideration, in the initial preamble, are that we don't have — the reason that this government should change is because we don't have doctors or we have a shortage of doctors, we have a shortage of teachers, and housing — first three things, okay. I think that it would be difficult to find a province or territory in this country right now that has enough doctors. I think back to the point where I have had family members who have worked in this sector, and I think back 30 years ago, sitting with my dad when he was in a position of having to recruit doctors and having a problem then. I can think about that 20 years ago. Rural Canada has had challenges getting doctors.

What I do know that has happened in the last four years is a successful negotiation with doctors, an increase — as I remember, and I apologize that I don't have the details of their agreement, but I think we have talked about compensation here. It is 30 percent greater than British Columbia, along with professional development opportunities that are extensive. Again, I don't believe that this is a regional issue.

There was a report tabled today. I will go through it. I think that what was illustrated by the Minister of Health and Social Services is that we use many different tools, whether it is visiting doctors or doctors who make this their home. I know doctors who are known as local doctors, but at the same time, those doctors spend part of their month in another part of Canada, but the reality is: Do we have the right resources? We probably need more doctors. We agree with that, and we are looking at different opportunities to bring more doctors here.

Part of the reason we need more doctors is because there are more people here, and I will touch on that in a second: Why are there more people here?

Second: teachers. We know, across this country, whether it is Atlantic Canada or central Canada, that we are in a position where there is a shortage of teachers. We have watched this ebb and flow. I can remember going to post-secondary, and they would say there are too many teachers, that people shouldn't go into an education program. Five years later, it was that you should go into an education program.

These are the reasons, of course — why I'm going back — why we were told today that the Government of Yukon should change. There is no confidence. It was doctors and again teachers.

The third is housing. When I speak about housing, I am going to compare and contrast. In the last five years, Community Services, in conjunction with Energy, Mines and Resources — in the last two years of our mandate, we have put more resources in place than the previous four years. That's what was going on with lot development. It's challenging work, yes. You're working with other levels of government. You want to align to make sure, and that led to the largest lottery for lots in the history of the City of Whitehorse. That, in turn, led to the highest level of value for building permits in 2020 — in the history of the City of Whitehorse. Then what happened? In 2021, in the first three-quarters of this year, we surpassed that.

So, you can't tell me that we have not worked together to ensure that we are investing in lot development and, in turn, in housing, because the numbers speak for themselves. These are record numbers of where we have gone for housing.

Now, what I do remember is — and I'm not saying that things aren't tough from housing. I know. It's my responsibility to work through a housing crisis. I understand that things aren't good, and I understand that there are a lot of people underhoused. As my critic, the Member for Whitehorse Centre, will say, there were 151 people in April who were homeless. There are probably 63 children, right now, who are underhoused. What I will say is that this is why we're making the largest investment in affordable housing in Yukon history.

What I remember from five years ago was a group of tents out there and a lot of machinery. That's what I remember about where we were on housing at that point.

Again, I would say that, when I think about where we're at, the reason today was doctors, teachers, housing, energy, cost of wood — it's tough sometimes at the table negotiating with our partners. Do you know why? It's because we had a stall on land planning for a decade and a half. We walked in, and the first thing that I was briefed on as Energy, Mines and Resources minister is that we had a case that was before the Supreme Court with land planning.

I think that when we go through all of these items in front of us — the other key thing is that we talk about economy. The economy is not even here. Not one thing has been said to us about — the Yukon Party has always worn business and the economy on their sleeve as their ability to drive the economy and drive business and that they were the champion for that. In the preamble today, there is not one thing on that. The reason for that is because what we saw, in 2015, was a recession. Now what we've seen is the second lowest unemployment rate in the country. We led the country in GDP growth — only two places in the country in 2020. We have seen record real estate transactions and building permits. We have seen retail sales and wholesale sales continue to grow year after year.

The reality is that we've had an extremely strong economy, and with that, in many cases, comes population growth, and with that comes its own set of challenges and circumstances. That's why we need more doctors; that's why we need more houses. These are all key things that we have to take into consideration.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the chance to rise today. I wish I had more time —

Deputy Speaker (Ms. Blake): Order, please.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the opportunity to rise and speak to Motion No. 236 presented by the Member for Copperbelt North. I will start off by saying, of course, that I am very opposed to this motion and I will explain why as we go forward. What I want to do, of course, is start by talking about why I joined politics. The desire to lead and be part of the change in our territory was strong. I never set out in my career to be in a political position. I was actually just speaking to women from the University of Waterloo who were thinking

about coming into politics just today, and part of my discussion with them was reflecting on how I got to where I am today and that it was never my goal in life to be in a Cabinet position and to be in this type of leadership position. I discussed with them what drew me to politics and, really, at the heart of it was regarding the non-action, I think, and the delays of the implementation of self-government — that we had the most progressive agreements in Canada and there was such a deep level of frustration from First Nations — and just establishing further implementation agreements. I felt most aligned with the team that the Premier of today was putting together. I felt that I aligned with the ideals of the Yukon Liberal Party. I had never been part of a political party before that time. I have always been at the forefront of public service for Yukoners in one capacity or another and did not align myself with a party. So, that's what got me here — and a long journey and very difficult to delve into the political world.

The more that I see of it, the more that I realize how much of it can be based on power and ego. That is not what brought me here; I can guarantee that. I feel that, if you are not sure about what your values are and what your foundation is as a person, you can be lost in this world very easily. Politics is very hard on the spirit. It's hard on the soul. I know that for sure.

I always work hard to be in a place of empathy and compassion for where people are at. Even with those across the way, I try hard to understand what is driving this and try to understand some of the behaviours that we see. I try to understand what's driving it so that I can continue to try to have that understanding and look at people from that place of being a human first. I struggle on lots of days when my colleague — the Minister of Health and Social Services and our Deputy Premier — and I have taken some big hits here, particularly during this Sitting. I have referred to it as lateral violence.

Previously, in my position as the Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, one of the tasks that I was tasked with was developing a new law around bullying and harassment in workplaces. We established that. We all actually voted for it. It was a consensus vote to pass that legislation. Well, that came into effect on September 1 in all workplaces in the Yukon that are under the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, and that includes this place that we call our workplace. This is our office. This is it. This is where we work every day.

We have endured a lot of lateral violence here. I feel like there have been a lot of personal attacks. It has been a lot to endure, and I keep coming back every day. I struggled — and I will be very honest — with the decision to run again in the spring election but felt that there was so much work left to be done and that I had made a commitment to Yukoners in 2016 and had done so much work to really work toward making life better for Yukoners.

Before I kind of get into some of the big accomplishments and where we are today, I also want to reflect on something that happened early in my time in this Legislature, and it is something that has weighed heavy on me and something that I have been really reflecting on. I'm almost reluctant to say it,

but I'm going to anyway because I want to bring the message out.

A few weeks ago, I had a discussion with some of my elders. I feel like they are the ones whom I am very much accountable to. I am accountable to my elders. They told me to keep going: "Keep going. You are doing a good job. You have a lot of matters before you and you have to keep going. If you need to lean on us, lean on us. We will be there for you."

The reason why I reflect on that a little bit is because, when I first came to the Legislative Assembly, my critic was the Member for Copperbelt North, and we had discussions and these great debates about how we were going to change some of the attitudes here in the Legislative Assembly and how we were going to work toward being kinder to one another. I have to say that it lasted for a bit of time, and I appreciated that.

The actual first time I was — because I didn't get a lot of questions when I first came to the Legislative Assembly — I didn't. So, I sat and listened and learned, and I watched my colleagues — particularly the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin — struggle and get attacked on a daily basis.

So, I didn't get a lot of questions. The Member for Copperbelt North kindly came across the floor to me one day and said: "Minister, we're going to ask you a question today. I don't want you to be caught off guard. It's a really important topic."

I thanked her very much. I said: "Thank you so much. This is important." It was about missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. I remember that day very distinctly and how I went to my colleagues in caucus later and said that this is the kindness that was shown to me today.

I tell this story because it is an important one for Yukoners to hear. I am saddened that my friend and my elder across the way — that we haven't spoken, probably in a couple of years, not really. I am speaking about the Member for Porter Creek North. I'm sorry. I correct that on the record, please — Hansard, if you would change that — because this is an important point that I am making here today, because I feel like this is where we have arrived.

We started with an incredible vision, and we have accomplished so much that Yukoners can be proud of. Before the election in the spring, I went through and looked at what was really important, what we did accomplish. One of the most enduring priorities was the renewal of First Nation relationships. We worked hard at this. This was almost decimated under the previous Yukon Party leadership — almost decimated — and that is, again, one of the things that brought me here: to renew this relationship.

So, the very first bill we passed was Aboriginal Day for June 21. That was the first bill; it was unanimous. We worked to bring this in. We re-established the Yukon Forum. We had 16 Yukon Forums prior to the 2021 election, and we have had two since being re-elected. We completed heritage plans that should have been completed decades before, but we did those: on Lansing Post and Conrad and the Selkirk renewal of their heritage plan. Not only were we the first jurisdiction to work on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, but we completed a strategy, and we responded first in Canada. That

is, again, what brought me back here to be in this Legislative Assembly and to work for Yukoners, to see the implantation of this.

We brought culture for the first time ever. We have never had a drum in this Legislative Assembly. We did a tribute — all of us together — for the late Doris McLean, and we brought a drum in here. We were able to hear, for the very first time, that expressed in this Legislative Assembly. Those are proud moments that we need to build on.

We restored the beautiful totem pole outside the Legislative Assembly to ensure that it had life to continue. We protected the Peel watershed. I want to remind Yukoners that the architect of the failed, previous work on the Peel watershed is now the Leader of the Yukon Party. I remind Yukoners of that, because this is what brought us to where we were divided in this territory, and the work we had to undertake was to fix that.

That is what we are doing in our school system as well. They had a decade and a half to correct the issues in our schools, yet they did not. I have gone back. I've looked at the reports. I have really studied them to see where real, concrete action was taken. Now we are seeing the unfolding of the issues that are coming from our school system, and it is because of the lack of attention to our school system and the politicization.

I thank the Leader of the Third Party for pointing it out and telling it for what it is — the politicization of child sexual abuse. I have asked us to tread lightly on this right from the very first day. It has gone so far. I know these are serious issues. We are working hard to get the answers for Yukoners. I am committed, as the Minister of Education, to work through the answers that we get and to work through the recommendations that are put before us and to work with that school community to ensure their voice is there. That is a commitment I made to them. I stand by that. Whatever recommendations are brought forward, I will work to implement them. That's why I'm here. That's why I came back to this Legislative Assembly.

I have thought a lot about folks who have come before me. I thought a lot about my uncle, John Edzerza — especially in this time that we are in right now — and what he stood for and the vision he had. I recognize that he struggled to work with folks across the way. I recognize that. You know why? He was my mentor. John Edzerza was my mentor. He told me what it was like to work with people who don't hold the same kind of ideals, who don't have that same desire to work in a way of empathy and compassion and to work for the right reasons — not political reasons, but the right reasons. I would say that I'm probably one of the least political people around. I don't understand some of these strategies that go on, because they are not the way that we should be treating one another. They are just not. They go against the grain for me, Madam Deputy Speaker.

When I think about why Yukoners rehired us — because that's the way I look at it; I got rehired to do this job. Again, I look at all of the things that were accomplished. Taking on tourism was really hard for me. It wasn't really, truly my background, but I gained that passion for it and worked with the industry. We developed the first new strategy that the

Yukon had seen in 18 years. It was the first-ever culture strategy in the Yukon. I worked on that. We responded to a global pandemic, where tourism was decimated. It was because of that plan that we had that helped us get to where we needed to go. We re-established our relationships with Yukon First Nations by entering into a heritage MOU. That is signatory to all the First Nations who are part of the Yukon Forum. This is charting a new way of doing things, and it's so vitally important.

One of the first actions we took when we came back to office was to change the mandate and the name of the Women's Directorate to Women and Gender Equity. It reflects the work that we have been doing, and we worked hard, me and the Minister of Health and Social Services, back in the previous mandate, and the Minister of Justice, to establish a sexual assault response team that we are now extending to the communities. This is important work for folks who have experienced this kind of violence. I could say so much more, but I know I have a limited amount of time.

The LGBTQ2S+ action plan, I want to say, was a huge accomplishment, and there is still so much work to be done to implement that. I do not see that commitment from the Yukon Party. In fact, they spoke against — they really spoke against the banning of conversion therapy when that was on the floor. So, what will they do with the rest of these actions? There are over a hundred in this plan. What would they do with that?

I have so much more I could say about the accomplishments that have been made and the work that's before us right now to rethink, re-envision, and really dig into the work that's at hand with our school system. We do have the right plans in place and the right recommendations.

I am so very committed to this work, and I thank you very much for those who have taken the time to hear my comments today. They definitely came from the heart. Some of them I didn't expect to say, and I hope that there is nobody offended by anything that I have said, because that wasn't my intent.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I do not support this motion. I have watched this Chamber for close to 30 years, and in my opinion, today marks a low point in Yukon democracy. Today marks a day, and I don't utter these words lightly, but I believe the Leader of the Third Party has the right of it: when Her Majesty's Official Opposition has leveraged a child sexual assault scandal to attempt to seize power.

Today marks a day when the Leader of the Official Opposition, a position of trust and responsibility, has put his own career above the will of Yukoners. He does so willingly and knowingly, based on supposition, opinion, rumour, and innuendo instead of waiting for evidence that will be presented in a few short months.

Mr. Speaker, that's curious, isn't it? Why rush this? In a few short months, as early as January, an independent review will make its findings known. This afternoon, the Official Opposition leader has already admitted that these four reviews have already brought new information to light — information that has shifted his perspective.

So, I ask again: Why rush this? Why not wait? Why not wait for the cold, hard facts from the independent lawyer?

Indeed, there is another fact that needs to be considered. In public statements, the Official Opposition has, without any tangible reason, disparaged the independent review and the lawyer in that role. Why? Why would they do that — baselessly undermine public confidence in the independent review? For what reason? Why would the Yukon Party push a non-confidence motion just months before evidence is presented while simultaneously disparaging and undermining the independent review?

These are good questions for people to ask.

I have some ideas, and I'll get to them shortly, but before I do, I want to assure Yukoners that their interests are always our prime focus. Your best interests are always our prime focus — your safety, your health, your well-being, your prosperity, your communities, and your businesses.

Over the last several years, we have accomplished a lot together. In the last election, Yukoners asked us all to work together. They wanted us to work with the opposition. To their credit, the New Democratic Party has done that. We negotiated a deal with the New Democratic Party and, as the Leader of the NDP has said, it isn't always easy and sometimes it's incredibly difficult, but we are working together for Yukoners.

We have and will continue to honour that deal that Yukoners have asked us to enter. Together, we will continue to deliver the stable, responsible, and responsive government that Yukoners have asked us to provide during these troubled times — during this pandemic.

I want to remind Yukoners of some of the incredible things that they have made possible through our governance in this partnership with the New Democratic Party. I want to remind Yukoners of the incredible things that they have made possible through their gracious support. We have resolved the legal disputes around the Peel plan that arose during the tenure of the member opposite. We immediately started to clean up that mess and restore trust with affected First Nations, which was lost due to the Yukon Party's actions. Further, continuing with reconciliation, our government restored the Yukon Forum. It was cancelled by the Cabinet of the previous government and, again, included the current Yukon Party leader. We took action on a pledge to increase First Nation representation in the civil service through our plan, *Breaking Trail Together*. We overhauled the entire procurement process and established a First Nation procurement policy — a commitment long-promised but ignored by the previous government. Sadly, they continue to oppose this policy. With our New Democrat partners, we are moving forward on land claims and successor legislation. We secured agreements with First Nations for the Yukon Resource Gateway project instead of attempting to plow ahead without them, as was the case previously.

These are just some of the ways that this government has advanced reconciliation, Mr. Speaker. We have enacted an LGBTQ2S+ action plan and policies to improve the lives of that community. We have worked to improve mental health services across the territory, and we are continuing to expand and improve those services. We have put in universal childcare and

early childhood education programs. We have drafted *Our Clean Future*, a nation-leading climate change policy with set-out, measurable goals. We paved the Dawson runway — something that the City of Dawson and Yukon's tourism industry had long asked for, but it never had happened. We also built an airport maintenance facility to properly support that long-requested infrastructure. We began a road maintenance program to ensure that all of Yukon's highways received brush-clearing, line-painting, and other safety measures. Prior to this, work was done willy-nilly. Now it is being done for everyone — fairly, consistently, and thoughtfully.

We passed the airports act, a piece of legislation lacking in the territory for 25 years. It defines government control over one of the most critical pieces of infrastructure that we run and brings them in line with the rest of the country in the 21st century. We established and certified the Mayo airport, and we have done proper consultations and groundwork so that we can proceed with a northern fibre link to Inuvik, which is being built as we speak and will improve Internet services to the entire territory — actually to both territories, Mr. Speaker.

We are currently implementing a new voice-over IP system, which was projected to save the government more than \$1 million a year. We replaced the Nares bridge in Carcross, and we are in the process of replacing the Pelly-Nisutlin bridge in Teslin — a project blocked due to lack of consultation on the part of the previous government. We replaced and are in the process of replacing many other aging, smaller bridges around the territory.

In partnership with Canada, we are undertaking the largest single capital project in the territory's history, doing major upgrades to a huge swath of the north Klondike Highway, which was all but forgotten by the previous government. We are in the process of rewriting one of the largest pieces of legislation — if not the largest piece in the Yukon government — the *Motor Vehicles Act*. We have increased the penalties for drinking and distracted driving. Through the years of lobbying efforts with our Alaskan partners, we now see money restored to the Shakwak, which will help maintain the north Alaska Highway.

We built a beautiful new French school for Whitehorse's francophone community, and we are in the process of building an elementary school in Whistle Bend — some of the first new schools that the territory has seen in decades. We are building infrastructure across the Yukon, including a new arena in Carmacks and a pool in Pelly Crossing, a new community centre in Beaver Creek, and a new health centre and housing complex in Old Crow to help people in those communities recreate better, live better, and live happier, healthier lives.

When it comes to the environment, we are taking the tough but necessary step of ending free, uncontrolled dumping stations around the Yukon. We have implemented a price on carbon. We have implemented a ban on plastic bags. We have started to fill up our government fleet with more electric vehicles. We are adding more electric vehicle charging stations throughout the territory. Our new motor vehicles act will allow the future development of self-driving electric vehicles. We have increased transparency and access to government

information through a nation-leading *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

As noted by others, we have stopped the Yukon Party's plans for a megadiesel plant, which would have ensured dependency on fossil fuel for a generation, even if alternatives were developed. We have blocked fracking. We have expanded the Yukon's solar and hydro generation. We funded a permanent American sign language interpreter for the deaf and hard-of-hearing community in Whitehorse, bringing them into the public discourse.

We are about to put in place the most progressive workers' compensation legislation in the country.

This, Mr. Speaker, is not an exhaustive list, but it is a sampling of some of the things that we have accomplished together. I know that my colleagues have touched on other things.

As mentioned by others, the member opposite is leveraging a child sexual assault case to undermine confidence in this government in advance of evidence. He has disparaged and undermined the independent review that is seeking answers. They have called it a sham.

I want to remind the Yukon Party benches that this is the government that Yukoners asked for just seven months ago. As voters demanded, we are working closely with our New Democrat partners to advance our joint agendas. I remind the members opposite that this is where the popular vote truly lies.

I also want to note that the Leader of the Official Opposition's own brief record since the election is less than stellar. In May, mere weeks after the election, more than 100 Yukoners were gathered outside of this building calling for the ouster of two of his MLAs. A few days into that ugly controversy, he finally acted and publicly benched both of them, but that only lasted nine days — nine days. Those disgraced MLAs didn't even serve the full penalty. You can check the public record and will find that some of them participated in the proceedings mere days after this was announced. They were supposed to take sensitivity training, but there's no evidence or public record of that ever happening — nothing. This was just a few short months ago.

The constituents of those MLAs asked them to resign. That didn't happen. When I was up the north highway, some of those Yukoners told me that they still rejected the representation of their MLA. So, now these folks are ready to govern? I hardly think so.

It needs to be noted that, just last week, the member opposite lost a vote of confidence of his own. He has been very quiet about it, but the conservative base went through a mitosis — splitting into two. Now there is the Yukon Party and the Yukon Freedom Party. That's hardly a sign of confidence in the member opposite's leadership. It doesn't engender confidence in his ability to govern through a pandemic. In fact, the rise of such a party might lead one to make a play to seize power.

Why did that split in the Yukon Party base happen? Well, in the last territorial election, in an effort to grab the progressive vote, the Yukon Party surprisingly faked right and turned left. Unfortunately, the conservative base didn't get the memo. They ran straight, as always, then slowed to a jog and then eventually

a walk, looking around, bewildered, and wondering where the member opposite had gone — where he had taken their party. Suffice to say that, once they figured it out, they were irked. I can only imagine what they are thinking now that the opposition leader has fully endorsed the terms of the confidence and supply agreement.

Don't get me wrong — there are many important, progressive, and cutting-edge initiatives there, but they are, as the member opposite acknowledged this afternoon, light years outside of a conservative supporter's comfort zone. They were bewildered and angry enough to start another movement, and then came the federal election, another platter of bungles. On the cusp of its call, the federal Conservatives summarily dumped the incumbent candidate without explanation. Then, the Leader of the Official Opposition recruited a replacement; then, when the disgraced one ran as an independent, the Yukon Party's leader publicly abandoned the Conservative candidate — the member opposite got operational paralysis. He proved to be a leader who couldn't lead; he refused to pick a candidate, so he angered both camps again.

So, the Conservative base has literally split in two because of the actions of the leader opposite, and it puts him in a tricky spot. It makes me wonder what the former reform supporter, the Member for Lake Laberge, is going to do, and it makes me wonder what the Member for Watson Lake is going to do. She recently supported the Freedom Party-supporting candidate's petition against the vaccine mandate. It makes me wonder about the integrity of the current Yukon Party.

This marks the first time since the 1990s that conservative voters have been so disgusted with the leader that they have formed new parties. This is not good news, not good news at all, and it really calls into question whether such a divisive figure is capable of providing stable government during a pandemic.

There is another problem: In the midst of the pandemic, the opposition leader openly opposing the advice of the chief medical officer of health. The chief medical officer of health has recommended a vaccine mandate to protect Yukoners. The opposition leader opposes the mandate. He doesn't support the vaccine mandate at all. So, I ask, how did he arrive at that policy approach? What doctors did he consult? What science did he lean on? What data is he pulling on to support his position/opinion? Again, he won't say. We have no answers, but during a pandemic, is this the type of leader Yukoners could depend on to provide stable, responsible government? A leader who cherry-picks CMOH recommendations based on his whims?

I promise to come back to the opposition leader and his possible motives. I see him fast-tracking, bringing down the government before seeking the advice, seeking the evidence or the results of several inquiries, as we have spoken about this afternoon. I see his party disparaging and undermining the inquiries, using the words "sham" and "so-called independent review." I see his party splitting and challenging his position, his rampant and unprecedented hard left turn, which, as he has admitted, continued last week. Now we see him wooing the NDP and abandoning his party's principles to seize

government. It all seems, well, reckless, frantic, and perhaps a little desperate. It seems like a power grab. As I said, this is not a good day for Yukon democracy.

Just a few short months ago, Mr. Speaker, Yukoners voted for a stable, cooperative government to take them through this pandemic. We negotiated that with our partners and remain committed to that minority government cooperation for the benefit of all. During a pandemic, that's what Yukoners have asked for. We do them a disservice if we don't honour that choice.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'm glad to be able to have my own opportunity today to make some reflections to my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly. Mr. Speaker, this past April, Yukoners re-elected a progressive and eager and responsible government to continue dealing with many important issues that the territory needs action on — and there are many.

Yukoners re-elected a government to carry out economic momentum, to address climate change, to build forward a clean future, to invest in renewable energy, to address the housing crisis, to continue strengthening strong relationships between First Nation governments — and this is for the benefit of all Yukoners — to improve our infrastructure throughout our territory, and perhaps more poignantly for us in these days, to unite — to unite against COVID and to finish this fight against this deadly virus.

Mr. Speaker, in April, Yukoners were looking for a stable government to get us through the pandemic, and they got one. Yukoners were looking for elected officials to work together in the months and years to follow the election to ensure that the progressive priorities identified were acted upon. This is happening.

I recognize and acknowledge the Yukon New Democrats for coming to the table in the weeks following the election and working with us to develop an innovative agreement — the confidence and supply agreement — people hear us calling it “CASA” probably all day — which has brought progress and stability to a Legislative Assembly that could have had far less progress, and it could have had even less stability.

As Premier, I continue to have regular meetings with the Leader of the Third Party, as does our CASA secretariat, with the NDP's team to ensure that initiatives identified as shared priorities get the attention of this Legislature and can be moved ahead.

As elected representatives, I know that we all care. Every one of us, we all care about the Yukon. We come here because we care deeply about the communities that we come from and our neighbours who have helped us out from time to time. I recognize the importance of being an opposition member. I spent five years, as you know, Mr. Speaker, in opposition. I firmly believe that the responsibilities that we hold as MLAs supersede our approaches as members of political parties; therefore, I think that, when we have an opportunity to work with our colleagues to benefit Yukoners, and if we agree with an approach, we should embrace that.

I, like yourself and others, heard after the election that, in a minority situation, the will of the people would be to see an

opportunity to see political parties working together. It's a shame that the Yukon Party has taken a far different approach. These days, in the height of the fourth wave and in the midst of a state of emergency, we are seeing the Leader of the Yukon Party saying one thing and doing another. It's concerning. Mr. Speaker, I think that Yukoners can see through the tactics of the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Yukon Party, as they claim to be willing to accept the measures and initiatives stated in the CASA, which were unpalatable for them not that long ago, in the spring, let alone weeks ago during this very Sitting, but they are willing to say that they would accept the CASA in order to take power.

Yukoners know that the Yukon Party doesn't actually believe this. Yukoners believe that the Yukon Party won't defend science. They won't defend the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health. Yukoners also know that the Yukon Party consistently spreads misinformation, providing a disservice —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Point of order, Member for Lake Laberge.

Mr. Cathers: The accusation — the Premier has just twice contravened Standing Order 19(h). The Premier just used the term “spreads misinformation”, which has been ruled out of order, as it implies intent by another member. He stated a position expressed by another member and then went on to say that the member didn't really believe it, which, of course, is tantamount to an accusation of a falsehood.

I would ask you to have him retract those statements and apologize to the House.

Speaker: Government House Leader, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 19(h) talks about how you would call someone to order if they said that another member uttered a deliberate falsehood. That is the language that I see here.

I believe this to be a dispute among members. What the Premier said was “misinformation”. I have not heard that called out of order here before, but I look forward to your ruling.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: I will review Hansard and get back to this House, if required. Please continue, Hon. Premier.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Suffice to say, these actions and tactics are stoking division in our territory. In contrast, Yukoners currently do have a stable government that is working for them, embracing a collaborative approach to ensure that we do have progress on health care, that we do tackle climate change and do so much more.

We have a government that has delivered, through collaboration with our NDP partners, important projects, such as Yukon's first safe consumption site and the expansion of safe supply — both of which reflect our harm-reduction approach to the opioid crisis — an increased minimum wage, working toward banning single-use plastics, more aggressive action to

tackle climate change, working with the private sector to explore paid sick leave, and advancing our work on electoral reform. This government has guided us through the pandemic and has kept our economy going strong. Under this government, the Yukon has enjoyed economic growth every single year since we took office, including during the pandemic. We have the highest GDP growth in Canada for 2020. This government brings results.

In my mandate letter, as the Minister of Finance and also as the Minister of the Executive Council Office, I committed to my Cabinet and to Yukoners that we — and I quote: “As a government ... have a responsibility to provide strong, stable leadership as we continue to respond to the challenges posed by COVID-19.” I will quote again: “We have led the nation with our response and will continue to support families, individuals and businesses as we emerge from the pandemic.”

Mr. Speaker, the fight against COVID-19 is not over — the fight to make a stronger, fair, cleaner, and more prosperous Yukon is not over. The territory needs leadership that will recognize and embrace their duties to always consider the best interests of Yukoners — leadership that is committed to the hard work ahead with a strong sense of purpose and a deep commitment to improving the lives of Yukoners and leadership that works closely with colleagues to serve the people of the Yukon each and every day.

I hold firm to those commitments. Those are promises that I made in my mandate letter. These are the commitments that I made to Yukoners, which this Cabinet and I will work toward each and every day.

We recognize that there is so much more work to be done to keep building on our accomplishments of the last five years. The Liberal government is committed to continuing to work hard to serve the needs of Yukoners, ensuring that individuals and businesses have the tools and the opportunities that they need to be successful. Our Liberal government will continue to work closely with the chief medical officer of health, continually re-evaluating the levels of restrictions in place to protect Yukoners against COVID-19.

Our government will support a strong and prosperous future for the territory, taking action to make life for Yukoners healthier, happier, and more affordable.

Speaking of the mandate letter, I am very grateful to my constituents of the Klondike and to all Yukoners for the opportunity, the honour, to serve as both Premier and the Minister responsible for the Executive Council Office and also the Minister of Finance. As both the Premier and also the minister with these two portfolios over my past five years, I have been proud to see so many tangible improvements take place in the Yukon.

In our previous term, we eliminated the small business tax, allowing businesses to hire more staff to improve their productions and to improve their services. We modernized the Yukon business investment tax credit by increasing the amount available from \$800,000 to \$4 million. We increased the company size limit to make Yukon an even more attractive investment jurisdiction. We increased the Yukon basic personal amount tax credit so that Yukoners save \$3 million annually on

Yukon tax bills in addition to \$7 million in federal tax savings by 2023. We reduced the corporate tax rate from 15 percent to 12 percent.

We designed and implemented the most successful legalized cannabis regime in Canada. We created an immigration pilot program to support employers in rural Yukon and signed a letter of intent with the Republic of the Philippines. We opened the NorthLight innovation hub alongside our partners — the Yukon University, the federal government, and Yukonstruct.

We released the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*, a 10-year vision for tourism that takes a whole-of-Yukon approach to sustainable tourism. We have invested in our innovative entrepreneurs to help them reach the world stage with a \$2-million investment in technology venture, funded with Panache Ventures, providing significant local training and investment opportunities.

In 2015, our territory was in a recession. In 2016, something happened — something big, something important. Yukoners chose leadership rather than division. Yukoners chose a team that was committed to bolstering our economy, and they got what they asked for. Our economy has flourished and our unemployment rate has been among the lowest in the country.

Mr. Speaker, you have heard this from Liberal members who spoke before me and who spoke about their resolve, about their commitment to their neighbours, and about their love of this territory — Liberal members who spoke about their tremendous measures that they, as leaders in their areas of focus, have accomplished for Yukoners. This team will not be deterred by political games —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Member for Lake Laberge, on a point of order.

Mr. Cathers: It seems to me that the Premier is in contravention of Standing Order 19(b) by speaking to matters other than the question under discussion or a motion or amendment. I would ask you to remind him of what the topic of this is, which, of course, is non-confidence.

Speaker: Government House Leader, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a confidence motion. It's talking about the confidence of this government, which is a very broad motion by its very nature. Members opposite have spoken about a range of topics, from energy to housing to doctors to the Hidden Valley Elementary School system. It's a range of topics. We are responding with a range of topics to talk about confidence in this House.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: There is no point of order. This is a dispute between members. Please continue.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Where I left off is quite fitting. This team will not be deterred by political games being put forth by the Yukon Party. If the Yukon Party wishes to continue

spending our time playing politics and embracing division, well, so be it. But in the meantime, this stable government will continue to get us through the pandemic and will continue to fight for the future and prosperity of our territory.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for allowing me to have my opinion heard in the Legislative Assembly today.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak about a matter of confidence. At the onset, I want to assure all members of this House that I do not need anyone to speak on my behalf. I am more than capable of expressing myself. I am more than capable of explaining myself.

First, I acknowledge the parents in the gallery. I want you to know that I see you. I thank those who are in the gallery. I thank those who have reached out in other ways. I have read your letters. I have had phone calls, and I know where you stand. This is an issue of confidence, and it's a tough one. I have made it clear that the Liberals have made some serious mistakes. I absolutely agree that the Liberal government has mishandled the Hidden Valley issue, but I want you to know that it is because of what you have shared, what you have experienced, and because you have shared the failures that you're living with that systemic changes will be made. I can assure you that we won't stop working toward this end to ensure that your experiences are never shared by another family.

I was struck yesterday by the intentions behind restorative justice, because restorative justice starts with a genuine acknowledgement of the harm that was caused. You and yours have been hurt, and this is not acceptable. Yukon government owes you a genuine apology. They need to assure you that it will never happen again. They owe you this. That need for this genuine apology is why we supported a motion that asks the previous minister to be removed from Cabinet. It's why we voted the way we did. It's why the Yukon NDP did the heavy lifting on that day — that need for a genuine apology.

So, let me explain why I'll be voting against this motion.

The Leader of the Official Opposition came to me early Friday evening to give me advance notice that this motion was coming. He told me that he was prepared to accept the confidence and supply agreement that the NDP had signed with the Liberals. I was surprised. I was surprised because only six months ago, after the spring election when I was approached by both the Yukon Party and Liberals, we spoke a few times, and it was that very same person who is making this proposition now who was not interested in working with us then.

The Yukon Party has repeatedly slammed this agreement for being too radical. They have continued, until Friday evening, to come out against the principles of that agreement at every opportunity and in very public ways. So, yes, I'm surprised that the Yukon Party is now willing to implement policies that they dismissed as too radical just six months ago.

But the Leader of the Official Opposition is now saying that he feels so strongly about accountability that he is ready to take these commitments on.

So, first, I want to talk about past accountability. When I was in this House with a Yukon Party majority government —

a government that regularly chose to disregard and disrespect First Nation governments, a government that forced First Nations to the courts to defend their belief in environmental protections and the sanctity of the land use planning process, a government that continually fought with First Nations in the courts and regularly lost, and a government that wanted to welcome unconventional gas extraction to the territory — under that government, I learned what a workplace laced with lateral violence meant. I remember how there was absolutely no way to work together because, for five years, there wasn't ever an acknowledgement that good and important ideas came from all sides of the House and there was never a willingness to work together. The Leader of the Yukon Party was in that government, as were four of his colleagues.

Let me touch on recent accountability. On Thursday last week, one of his MLAs came to me and finally apologized for an event that had happened in the spring. After months of silence, I got an apology. I was touched. Maybe, Mr. Speaker, this is where I'm still naïve, because I'm always optimistic. I was touched; I really was. I thought: Oh finally, after months and months of silence, I finally get an apology. It felt genuine, and I'm still hopeful that it was, but looking back at the timing, it gives me pause. It turns out that I received that apology just 24 hours before I was approached by the Leader of the Yukon Party.

Maybe folks will be surprised to hear that I just got an apology, because as we know, the MLAs were back-benched this spring, and this fall, they got their portfolios back. The leader said that amends had been made, but I don't know who those amends were made to, because it wasn't me, at least not until Thursday. I will put it on the record, Mr. Speaker, that I did get an apology in the spring, and for that I am grateful.

The day after that long-awaited apology, the Leader of the Official Opposition comes to my office and makes me this offer. This is where it is so hard, because of that timing. What felt like a heartfelt apology made me question whether or not I had been manipulated. It pains me to say this, because I don't think it was done in that way, but it made me feel like there was a bigger game being played that I never agreed to play. I never agreed to this — never.

This is not what I call accountability. This is not what I call leadership. For someone who apparently feels so strongly about accountability, this just doesn't add up to me, unfortunately, so that is why I question the proposal itself. It was made on Friday afternoon. It didn't last long. It was so rushed that the Leader of the Official Opposition forgot to tell me half of his proposal, which was about the public inquiry, but I did learn about that on Monday through media coverage. To be clear, the Yukon NDP has already tabled a motion to call a public inquiry. After the independent reviews all come in, I am prepared to call it for debate, because if answers are still needed, the Liberal government owes it to the Hidden Valley community to get to the bottom of those questions.

I hope that, if I am forced to call that motion, the Liberal government will support it, understanding that they owe it to the Hidden Valley community.

We have someone who is trying to convince me that we can work together, but they target me and my caucus as soon as Question Period starts on Monday morning, and then they go to the media and say that, absolutely, they are hoping we will change our mind, that we can still work together, when only a few minutes after slamming us in the House repeatedly, there is a difference of opinion there in the media.

To be clear, this isn't the first time that I have been targeted by the Yukon Party, and I'm not so naïve to think that it will be the last. So, yes, I have trouble believing this offer is genuine.

And top of that, the Leader of the Yukon Party is already making promises on something he has no control over — elections. Voting in favour of this motion would most likely result in the calling of an election this winter. I know that, and I assume the Leader of the Opposition knows that too, because I reached out to an expert on the matter and was told, if he had to put money down on the issue, that he would put his money on an election, because it's not up to the opposition to decide. Again, he is promising something that can't be delivered on.

Let's take a minute to talk about something that deeply troubles me. This Monday afternoon, in a media interview, the Leader of the Official Opposition was asked about the fact that these abuses started under a Yukon Party government. Because of a timeline charted by the RCMP, we now know that the first known abuse happened under a Yukon Party government and was handled internally at the time. To be clear, more children were made vulnerable because of how this issue was handled internally when the Yukon Party was in power.

Someone asked about it in the media on Monday. The Leader of the Opposition said — and I quote: "... the school made a decision to handle some sort of allegation..." Some sort of allegation — language is incredibly important, and this is a weak and disturbing change of language. "Some sort of allegation", because when it happened under a Liberal government, it's a "sex abuse scandal", but when talking about when it happened under a Yukon Party government, it became "some sort of allegation" — some sort of allegation that allowed children to be harmed in the interim, some sort of allegation that allowed it to continue.

Let us be clear — both the Liberals and the Yukon Party are responsible for hurt that was caused to children. Both the Liberals and the Yukon Party are responsible for the harm that was caused to children. Both the Liberals and the Yukon Party were in power when children did not receive the support that they needed — both of you — and they did not receive the support that they deserved.

Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Party is using the tragedy of a sex abuse scandal at a school as leverage for their own political gain, and this is shameful. So, right now, the Yukon Party loves to quote me, as I said that I felt that the commitments laid out in the confidence and supply agreement are too important to bring down the government, but they are conveniently forgetting the other piece that I said, which was that, even though I was voting in favour of the deputy minister's resignation, I was not oblivious to the political game that the Yukon Party was playing. I am still not oblivious to the games that are being played.

I know that not everyone will agree with the position that we are taking today, and I have to answer to that — hundreds of times — just so that the government understands — hundreds of times. My job is to put Yukoners at the centre of my decisions, and even though, for some, it does not feel like that is what I am doing today, that is what I am doing today. I am well aware that my decision will be questioned and it will be criticized, but, Mr. Speaker, what we don't need right now are political games. We don't need a party leveraging the abuse of children for their own political gain.

What we need is for everyone in this House to work together to solve the crises that Yukon is facing. We need to focus on fixing what needs to be fixed.

So, let me finish by saying this to the government: This is not a free pass. If anything, the rules have been redrawn today, and I expect more, and I expect better. The government has failed to act on and address many issues, and Hidden Valley is the primary one. I hope that you understand that what is needed right now is an acknowledgement and a genuine apology, because families need to heal, and that has to be the first step.

So, Mr. Speaker, we in the Yukon NDP will continue to ask the hard questions. We will continue to hold the government accountable, because that's what Yukoners have asked us to do. We will always put people over politics.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Mr. Dixon: I thank my colleagues for their comments. There has been a lot said today about a range of issues, some related to what I feel is the issue at hand and some not, but ultimately, the intent behind this motion was to bring about answers and accountability.

I have heard from many Yukoners about a variety of issues, but most particularly the one that we find ourselves discussing the most is the Hidden Valley issue. I have been asked to do everything that I can do — everything within my power — to bring about answers and accountability. I realize that a confidence motion is a big step, but that's the step that I need to take to be able to tell myself and Yukoners that I have done everything that I can do to bring that about.

That's why we're here. That's why this motion is here. That's why I made the offer that I have — to avoid, in my opinion, an election — which was to honour the confidence and supply agreement, despite my strong reservations and my strong feelings about some of the policies therein.

As I said in my opening remarks, I felt that this was more important than my own disagreements about labour law or mining policy or rent control or any of those kind of policy issues. I thought it was bigger than that, and that's why I made the offer that I did.

In addition, I have noted my interest in seeing a public inquiry come forward and look at the full breadth of what happened, going back right to the beginning of when this individual was hired by the Yukon government. I have done that because I think that everyone deserves to know exactly

what happened and when and who knew and when. That includes times when I was in office as a Cabinet minister. I am, without a doubt, willing and interested in participating in that kind of review. I know that others have brought forward the idea that this could come about in the spring. My intention was to not see us wait that long and to see us go back to that sort of a review right away.

I know that the government has discussed a number of the reviews that are underway. I would note that, of the four that are underway, three of them are in no control of the Yukon government at all. They were not initiated by the Liberal government and they were not supported initially by the Liberal government. I would note that the Minister of Education, at the time when the Child and Youth Advocate launched her review, indicated that it was not within the legal authority of the Child and Youth Advocate to launch such a review. We disagreed then and we disagree now with the government on that.

None of that matters as much anymore, Mr. Speaker. Ultimately, like I said, I brought this forward because I needed to be able to tell myself and tell Yukoners that I have done everything that I can do — everything within my power as Leader of the Official Opposition — to bring about a change, to bring about a change in direction, and to bring about answers and accountability. That is what this was about.

Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks, and I look forward to voting on this.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Madam Deputy Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Disagree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Disagree.

Ms. Blake: Disagree.

Ms. Tredger: Disagree.

Deputy Clerk (Ms. Kolody): Mr. Speaker, the results are eight yea, 10 nay.

Speaker: The nays have it. I declare the motion negatived.

Motion No. 236 negatived

MOTION NO. 239

Deputy Clerk: Motion No. 239, standing in the name of Ms. White.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Leader of the Third Party:

THAT the House urges the Government of Yukon to establish a publicly funded community walk-in clinic staffed by primary care providers, including family physicians and nurse practitioners, who can offer a range of health and social supports.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I don't think I need to repeat the urgency of this issue. Everyone in the Yukon deserves primary care. We need a primary care clinic that is public — that means publicly funded and publicly run. Primary care is the first and the best defence against illness. It's where your family doctor, nurse practitioner, dietician, or a whole host of other staff work to prevent illness. From birth until death, we need health care, and a public walk-in clinic can provide that.

Until everyone has real primary care, our system is not truly universal. This government cannot call our health care system "public" until we have a real public community walk-in clinic.

Right now, we're in a crisis. There are thousands of Yukoners who don't have any primary care. To be as accurate as possible, it's 21 percent of Yukoners who do not have access to primary care, according to the experts who wrote *Putting People First*. Mr. Speaker, that is one in five Yukoners.

Just the numbers don't do this crisis justice. At the heart of this crisis are people and their stories, so I want to share some of the stories that have come out of this crisis — some that are shared with us. There is the young Yukoner who has been struggling to get out of bed lately, and no matter how hard they try, something just doesn't feel right. But without a family doctor, they can't get a referral to a psychiatrist. If they go to the ER, they won't get seen for hours, and then they probably won't get that referral and they won't get the follow-up and they are left on their own.

There is the Yukoner on the wait-list who wakes up and often feels dizzy. When she exercises, she becomes lightheaded. She knows that something is off, but she does not have a family doctor. Without one, she can't get a referral, she can't get basic bloodwork, and she can't get treatment. For something as simple as an iron deficiency, she can't get treated here.

We have heard from some Yukoners who have mild health issues — nothing worthy of the emergency room, but you never know. They don't have a family doctor, and some of these folks haven't seen a health care professional in years. There are Yukoners who are given devastating diagnoses every day but, without a family doctor, these Yukoners are left to flounder, waiting to navigate the system on their own, waiting for their illness to get worse, with little follow-up.

There is a Yukoner with diabetes who recently spoke out. Without primary care, she doesn't have access to the tools that she needs to stay healthy. She can't get prescriptions, she can't get bloodwork, and she can't get follow-up.

One of the first ways to detect diabetes is through the eyes, so a visit to the optometrist can point out the concern, but without a family doctor, that person can't get a bloodwork order, and they don't have anyone to walk them through the results. Then they don't have anyone to prescribe the medication if they do need treatment.

There are so many aging seniors in the Yukon, and all of these Yukoners need health care. As they age, they face new health issues. Without primary care, these issues — like high blood pressure, arthritis, dementia, and so much more — are just left to get worse.

There are seniors who can't get a driver's licence without a doctor, because a doctor fills out their forms and they've had to wait in the cold to take the bus or rely on neighbours and friends for rides to basic errands. You are only 70 when you need your first medical for licence renewal in the Yukon.

There are thousands of Yukoners who are going to the emergency room for non-urgent care, from ear infections to sore throats to headaches to skin conditions. Right now, Yukoners are going to the emergency department for non-urgent care. It's not where they want to be. We know that this is the most costly and most expensive and least effective form of health care. People in the communities are forced to drive for hours, or days, just to sit and wait in the ER for something that isn't even an emergency, but they have to do it because they are desperate.

People looking for referrals are being turned away because they do not have a family doctor to follow up with. Every time a person needs to return to the emergency department, they are pretty much guaranteed to have a different doctor, and they need to start the process all over again.

To be clear, I'm on the side of physicians working in the emergency department. It must be frustrating to know that there are dozens of people waiting for non-urgent care while trying to help patients with real emergencies. Mr. Speaker, in the emergency room, they are left to deal with renewing prescriptions, dressing changes, wound care, or stitches needing to be removed — or mental health support when really what you need is your family doctor to refer you to a psychiatrist. What you really need is a family doctor to refer to any of our specialist supports.

Putting People First didn't just give the government a checklist; it told them what we need to do to fundamentally shift the way we think about health care — that we need to do health care differently. We have seen some of the recommendations implemented, and that is great, but there are some bigger tasks ahead.

They talk about clinics with integrated care support, and I would hope that, with the creation of a community clinic, we would include nurse practitioners and social workers, mental health support workers, a dietician, respiratory therapists, pharmacists, and midwives when that becomes a reality. Mr. Speaker, I imagine that this clinic would have walk-in

services so that, at any time, someone can come in and get the help that they need with no barriers, no hurdles, and no thousand-person wait-list.

When we talk about *Putting People First*, we need to be looking at the whole person and their needs, not just what they might present with. Why would you treat a person with diabetes if you don't even know if they have access to healthy food or have adequate cooking facilities? Why would you treat a person with respiratory problems if you don't know what their living situation is? Are they living in an overcrowded situation? Are they living with mold?

The social determinants of health are just as important as acute health care. We are not talking about reinventing the wheel. Public community clinics already exist across the country. When I lived in Australia, I didn't have access to a primary care doctor. I was a visitor. What I did have access to was a walk-in clinic. I would call, make an appointment, I would go to that clinic, and I would get primary health care.

The *Putting People First* report looked at the Nuka model in Alaska as one that the Yukon could adapt and follow. Mr. Speaker, this is not a new idea; in fact, we talked about this model in opposition when I was first elected 10 years ago. What the *Putting People First* committee found was that the Nuka was a model that promoted decreasing health care costs and improved health care outcomes, as well as increased satisfaction of clients and providers. That should be the focus — improved health outcomes. Improved health outcomes first, while recognizing our steadily increasing health care costs.

A public clinic is one where health professionals are paid a fair wage. It's where they are paid a wage, so it's not a fee-per-service model. A public clinic is one that could offer a holistic and health-focused service to Yukoners. A public clinic gives everyone access to health care. A public clinic treats patients with dignity and respect. Making it a walk-in clinic would help Yukoners who are in such desperate need for real care, and it wouldn't be the revolving door of an emergency department that is not built to address health-focused services.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that you have heard from folks about the wait times in the emergency department. Imagine if all of those individuals with non-emergent care had a community clinic that they could access. In *Putting People First*, they talked about implementing big changes to improve Yukoners' health. We can't ever lose sight of that. Primary care is not just about treating the unwell Yukoners, but focuses on improving the health of all Yukoners. It's about tackling the problems upstream so that they don't come back downstream.

Community clinics have a holistic, whole-person approach. No one is just an ear infection, and no one is just a head cold, and no one is just a broken bone. At the heart of health care are people. At the heart of this decision are Yukoners, so I urge everyone in this House to do what is right for people.

I will continue to urge that this government open a public community walk-in clinic, because I believe that it is doable. I know that it is recommended, and this would put people first in our decisions.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would like to start by thanking the Leader of the Third Party for bringing this motion forward. I am mindful of the time today, but I do want us to continue to speak about this motion as long as possible and certainly in the future. I am concerned that we may not finish the full debate with respect to this, and I appreciate the timing of this particular session, and I want to express the hope that we continue.

I will reach out to the Leader of the Third Party to have a more detailed conversation about the options that are real here in the territory, because I have a number of things to say about that, but before I go there, I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the Leader of the Third Party for her comments and for her submission to this Legislative Assembly on the first motion that was spoken to here today, because I know how complicated these issues can be, and I just wanted to express thanks to her for that, because I think that she spoke from the heart and she spoke about people. She spoke about people here in the territory with respect to this motion as well.

As a result, I want to express my concurrence in that, my agreement. Many of the comments that I will — well, or all of them — will be based on the concept of people, and people are at the heart of our medical system, and they are at the heart of the needs for our medical system to be changed and adjusted.

Mr. Speaker, the *Putting People First* comprehensive review of the Yukon health and social services system here in the territory was unprecedented. It was a complete review of the details of how we provide health and social services to Yukoners and how we need to do better at doing so. It examined the way that the Yukon government currently delivers health and social services and how this compares with high-performing health care systems in other jurisdictions.

We heard the member opposite just mention some of those. I won't go through the details of all of it, but I think it's very important to note that one of the primary pieces of information that was given to government and given to Yukoners through this process was the fragmented nature of our current system. There were all kinds of very important pieces of information, all of which have been accepted by government, because it is critical that we accept these changes, acknowledge these shortcomings, if we are going to improve.

We treat illness and emergencies pretty well here in the territory, but we need to focus on prevention. We do not have a health system that tailors to individual needs. We do not have a health system that is culturally safe for some people. That's not acceptable. The work is sometimes done in silos, and we need to work better together — hospitals, home care, primary care, social services, et cetera — we need to remove silos.

We need a single, clear vision and a common purpose of our health and social services system. This is almost insurmountable as a topic, but it also is an exciting piece of information, because we know that we can develop such a thing — a single, clear vision and a common purpose for the Department of Health and Social Services and for the ways in which we deliver all health care across the system. There are costs to the system. There are costs to individual people. There is too little coordination, and there is a lack of data. There are many more details, but we certainly got the message that we

need tools and procedures to evaluate, to plan, and to improve the system going forward.

I think that it is also important to note that *Putting People First* also identified strengths. It is important to highlight these, because these are all about people. They are all about the people who deliver these services, and these are the strengths of our system. We have compassionate and dedicated care providers. We have strong First Nation service delivery; we have strong, caring NGOs; and we have health centres in all communities — not something that exists everywhere in Canada. I know that seems strange, because it is so inherent in our understanding of Yukon medical and health services. We have nursing staff who are interested in expanding their scope, and we have fit and physically active Yukon citizens, higher than the national average, and we have emergency wait times that are below the national average. We have, overall — as I said a minute ago, our system takes care of sick people pretty well, but that is not to say that we don't have incredibly mountainous hills to climb.

We need an emphasis on prevention, both for health and for mental wellness. We heard that clearly, particularly from communities. We don't have what Yukoners want and need in that area.

Mr. Speaker, *Putting People First* is about creating a new vision of wellness here in the territory. It is about creating a system of integrated, whole-person care. I think that the member opposite, who is sponsoring this motion, said it very, very well. We can't do that — we can't treat one piece of a puzzle if what we are trying to do is put a puzzle together. It requires big changes. I can't possibly go through all of those today, but I do want to speak specifically about some of the efforts that are being made to provide the kind of service to fill the gaps that are currently being felt here in the territory, and across Canada, with respect to a shortage.

The key categories of recommendations — and people will know that there are 76 of them — are all broken down into about seven categories.

The one that I want to concentrate on today is “building a new health care system”, because that is what this motion is asking about — a way in which we can serve Yukoners with a walk-in clinic.

Some of those recommendations will take time to implement. Some actions can happen more quickly and have begun to happen, and some have happened already. Others will take much longer as we look to review the system of health and social services.

There is integration of work required. I am going to stop for a second to say — and my colleagues have heard me say this, and people who know me have heard me say this — that all complex problems require a spiderweb of solutions. There is no panacea. There is no one magic bullet that solves these kinds of complex problems — particularly the complex problems that we have with respect to social services and health care but in all areas where people are at the centre of these kinds of services. The integrated work is absolutely critical.

Many of the recommendations in *Putting People First* are also integrated into some of the ongoing work that is based on extensive consultation and engagement already being done by

the Yukon government — things such as the aging-in-place action plan, the medical travel review, and the response to the Blackjack inquest, just to name a few.

As I have said, 11 of the recommendations have already been completed. I can speak to some of those, but work is underway in the planning and the implementation of the remaining recommendations, including relevant commitments that we have made in the 2021 confidence and supply agreement. There is the creation of a policy implementation committee responsible for overseeing the implementation of the recommendations. *Putting People First* calls for broad health and social services changes, and it is anticipated that completing some of those will be over an extensive timeline. That is certainly not to say that work is not underway.

The introduction and implementation of affordable childcare and the transferring of the childcare services unit to the Department of Education happened on April 1, 2021, and that is because it was recommendation 3.8. That was critically important and has been done; it has been done by this government. It has been done and drastically changed the services that are provided to Yukon families with respect to affordable childcare.

We have doubled the medical travel subsidy. We have extended the days eligible for reimbursement, and we are undergoing other reviews of the medical travel program. We have already added locations where people can travel for service. Those were recommendations 2.4, 8.1, and 2.8. We have expanded eligible vaccines. Yukoners are now able to receive things like the Shingrix, Pneumovax, and the Fluzone high-dose vaccines for Yukon seniors — recommendation 2.14.

Mr. Speaker, it's easy to list these achievements, but they are not easy to accomplish. Each and every one of them have either days, months, or sometimes years of work behind them. People work — people who work on the policies, people who work on engagements, people who work on drafting legislation, orders, or regulations that need to give life to these things. There are many more that I could list. We have reduced pharmacy markups. There has been the creation of an evidence and evaluation unit, which has been required by the report. We have expanded palliative and end-of-life programs and supports for Yukoners living in communities, and we have increased the daily rate for residential long-term care, which was also a recommendation. We are hiring additional nurse practitioners where needed to increase access to primary health care providers. A further 30 other recommendations are currently in progress.

I will take the opportunity next to speak about the bilingual health clinic here in Whitehorse because it is an important element of what is being asked for with respect to this motion today.

The bilingual health clinic is slated to open early next year. It actually will likely occur in the spring of 2022. We are looking to try to do that sooner. I can indicate that the bilingual health clinic will open here in the City of Whitehorse. There are a number of conversations happening with respect to how that clinic will be staffed. We expect it to be staffed by two full-time

doctors, nurse practitioners, and other care providers, and it will provide the opportunities for after-hours care as well as the opportunity for, we hope, a walk-in element.

I am going to speak a little bit about the polyclinics, because I think that this is one of the most important parts of *Putting People First* that is in relation to this particular motion. I say that because this motion is asking for a walk-in clinic to serve Yukoners for all of the reasons mentioned earlier, which is an important aspect of our health and social care system. To ensure that Yukoners have access to primary care services, the independent expert panel envisioned creating integrated and collaborative health care clinics, primary care settings that are supported by a variety of health and social care professionals working together with clients to discuss treatment plans and options for care — much as the member opposite described. These integrated and collaborative health care clinics would be made up of primary care providers, such as a physician or a nurse practitioner, who would collaborate with a team of professionals to deliver personalized service and develop treatment plans.

In 2022, we will be opening a bilingual health centre in Whitehorse, which is an example of this type of clinic. The primary care setting is expected to reduce some of the pressures currently being experienced across our primary health care system — so, as noted by the member opposite with respect to our hospital. The Mental Wellness and Substance Use Referred Care Clinic is also an example of an integrated and collaborative health care clinic. The Referred Care Clinic includes a team of Mental Wellness and Substance Use services staff, such as licensed practical nurses, registered nurses, nurse practitioners, outreach support workers, and an opioid prevention coordinator, as well as contract physicians with respect to this.

We continue to work closely with the Yukon Medical Association to discuss options for improving access to primary health care services and integrated collaborative care. I think that this is an important point for me to emphasize here in the short amount of time that I have today, because this is critical to achieving what is asked for in this particular motion. We must work — and we are keen to work — with the Yukon Medical Association and with individual doctors here in Whitehorse to envision and have them advise us as to what their vision is with respect to a walk-in type of service that could be provided.

We are not looking at years of engagement here; we are not looking at months of conversations that go nowhere. We are having those conversations in very real time, and the bilingual health centre that will be opening is a key part of this.

Further, a community clinic that is anticipated, or asked for, in this motion is something that requires that kind of work. We have to have those conversations with our partners. Medical professionals — and doctors in particular — here in the territory are private business owners. That is not at all the barrier to this. By the way, they are funded by public funds here in the territory with respect to the negotiations that happen with them. How they are paid — and the scales and the categories

for which they are paid — are open to negotiation, and that is underway in the near future here in the territory.

But it is absolutely critical for my colleagues to understand here that they are individual doctors, and other groups — the Yukon Medical Association, the Canadian Medical Association — are all keen to address this issue. They are keen for us to have conversations with them — what they envision a clinic might look like, how they might help us staff such a clinic. Those conversations are ongoing.

Just to note that we are working closely with the Yukon Medical Association to discuss options for improving access to primary health care services and integrated collaborative care — it is absolutely critical. Primary health care reform, Mr. Speaker, focuses on providing comprehensive services to a defined population by a collaborative team of providers. Let me just say it again, because I think that this is an incredibly important part, that primary health care reform, which is what we are talking about here — how we can do things differently, how we are going to adopt services for Yukoners that are meaningful and relevant for them and provide them the service they are seeking — focuses on providing comprehensive services to a defined population by a collaborative team of providers, as I have noted, similar to what has been mentioned by the member opposite in her opening remarks.

Integrative and collaborative health care clinics are an important component of primary health care reform. We are working toward including objectives such as increased opportunities for Yukoners to access walk-in appointments, same-day services, and practitioners who are working jointly on person-centred care. I think those are important paths that our government has chosen to go down to provide better services to Yukoners.

In order to determine how we might staff a walk-in clinic and other services across the territory, our government is committed to supporting and offering financial supports to individuals who are pursuing health and related education. I am interested in making this point today because there has been some information that is not accurate put forward in the Legislative Assembly. This is an opportunity to address this, as it is an important one. Our government is pleased to offer financial supports through a medical education bursary, a nursing education bursary, and the health professional education bursary programs. \$89,000 is available for 16 new health-related education bursary recipients each year. That is provided by the Department of Health and Social Services. These three education bursary programs represent just one part of the overall funding to support health care recruitment and retention.

In 2021-22, our government budgeted \$4.39 million for the Yukon Medical Association to support 13 physician recruitment and retention initiatives and programs, as well as an additional \$125,000 for the Yukon Medical Association to administer their medical student bursary program. Just by comparison, back in 2014-15, Health and Social Services budgeted \$2.36 million to the Yukon Medical Association for their recruitment and retention initiatives, which was good at the time, including the medical student bursary. We have

increased that significantly. This \$4.39-million funding is used by the Yukon Medical Association to administer incentive programs, such as the continuing medical education program and the preceptor support program. It's used for locum support funds, parental benefits programs, the physician relocation program, a recruitment program, a retention program, resident and medical student support program, and the office renovation program, among other things.

Information about these programs is available on the Yukon Medical Association's website. I think that this is an important thing for Yukoners to know.

During the 2021-22 fiscal year, the Department of Health and Social Services also provided \$150,000 to the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, and they administer the continuing nurse education fund with those dollars. Yukon residents who are studying medicine, or are intending to apply to medicine, may also apply for a number of other funding programs that are not administered necessarily by the Government of Yukon, but financial assistance is available through the Canadian Medical Foundation, the First Nation health program at Whitehorse General Hospital, and the Yukon Foundation.

As I noted, these are important pieces of information. The reason I bring them to the attention of the floor today is that it is critical for us in considering walk-in elements to the medical clinics we have or the ones that we will have. It's critical for us to understand how we will be staffing those locations, because as I said, we must work closely with our medical physicians in the territory. The opportunity to work with them going forward includes education and continuing education for those professionals.

Since 2016, we have increased the number of in-territory resident pediatric, orthopaedic, and psychiatric supports, and we are supporting Yukoners living in communities to access primary care. I also should add that we have increased significantly the in-territory surgical team and are providing more and more services to Yukoners right here at home within the last number of years. We will continue to grow those programs, as the need arises.

During the 2020 calendar year, the Yukon was supported by a total of 75 resident physicians and an additional 20 specialists. In addition, there were 95 visiting physicians and specialists providing coverage, and 24 of these resident physicians also serve Yukon communities, which I think is an important point.

Services continue to be available at Whitehorse General Hospital and at the Yukon Women's MidLife Health Clinic and are available to support specific care needs. Yukoners are also encouraged to register for the "find a family doctor" program, which we know has, since 2019, matched over 1,000 Yukoners with a family doctor.

Is that enough? No. Do we have folks on a waiting list? Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. In the coming months, we will continue that work with the Yukon Medical Association in determining how we can provide those kinds of increased services. We are working with our partners and options here in the territory to increase virtual health opportunities.

I should mention something that gets missed pretty regularly in our relatively short answers here when being asked about this in the Legislative Assembly Question Period. It is just a reminder to Yukoners that we have the 811 nurses line, which is seven days a week, 24 hours a day and operates for you to have access to a nurse health professional with experience who can often answer questions that are of an urgent nature, or not so urgent, that Yukoners might have: This is my situation, and this is my issue. Should I seek urgent care, or should I make an appointment? Should I do a trip to emergency? Can I see a nurse practitioner? Those kinds of —

Speaker: Order, please.

The time being 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

Debate on Motion No. 239 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 38

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, November 25, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier Government House Leader* Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
Hon. Nils Clarke	Riverdale North	Minister of Highways and Public Works; Environment
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Government House Leader* Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Minister of Economic Development; Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Jeanie McLean	Mountainview	Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

Currie Dixon	Leader of the Official Opposition Copperbelt North	Scott Kent	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Yvonne Clarke	Porter Creek Centre	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Emily Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Annie Blake	Vuntut Gwitchin

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

*Government House Leader: Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee to November 4, 2021; Hon. John Streicker from November 5, 2021

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, November 25, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: I will now call the House to order. We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will proceed at this time with the Order Paper.

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Kent: I would like to ask members to join me in welcoming two very special guests to the gallery here today: my wife, Amanda Leslie, and our young son, Eli Aviugana Kent. They are here to listen to the tributes on Adoption Awareness Month. Welcome.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

Hon. Ms. McLean: I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

Every year, the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence launches on November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and ends on December 10, Human Rights Day. We know that gender-based violence is a very real problem in the Yukon, with rates nearly four times the national average. However, it does not affect us all equally. Eighty percent of victims identify as women, and indigenous Yukoners are three times as likely to experience domestic violence.

Across the country, 25 percent of intimate partner homicides are committed against members of a visible minority in Canada. This is not the first time that I have stated these numbers here in the Legislative Assembly; however, I think that they are important to repeat. It is a stark reminder of the violence that so many people are experiencing in our territory right now.

This year has put that into sharper focus. This past October, the territory was shocked by the tragic killings in Faro. My heart goes out to the families and the community of Faro who lost their loved ones. I am sure many Yukoners never thought something like this could happen in our territory.

Although we will not know the details until the case works its way through the justice system, we do know that one of the victims was in a long-time relationship with the accused. This event shows us that these statistics on violence are not just numbers. Intimate partner violence, domestic violence, and

gender-based violence of all kinds is a tragic reality in the Yukon. There are people behind these statistics.

As I was preparing for this tribute, I went looking for what is happening throughout the Yukon, and I want to highlight the Dawson City Women's Shelter. They have launched a blog, starting today, on various topics related to gender-based violence. I encourage folks to check it out. The information is so well put together, and I am so impressed with this organization and how they have worked in the Yukon. They are very active on social media and can be found on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook.

I want to thank all of the organizations supporting victims and survivors of gender-based violence all across the territory.

I call on Yukoners to be an ally in the fight to end gender-based violence. How can you do this? Listen. Believe. Educate yourself and others. Speak out. Intervene when it's safe, and act.

To those in the territory affected by violence, I believe you. I stand with you.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize today as the beginning of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, which runs until December 10.

The global theme for this year's 16 days of activism is "Orange the World: End violence against women now!"

According to Women and Gender Equality Canada, 30 percent of women and girls in our country — for transgender or gender-diverse people, this number almost doubles at 59 percent. This is not acceptable. The violence happens behind closed doors and out in the open, at home, at school, at the workplace, and on the streets.

On this day and throughout the next 16 days, individuals, organizations, and governments around the world raise awareness of gender-based violence. People share stories and experiences in an effort to inspire change.

There are a number of important dates coming up in the next 16 days. Today marks International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. December 10, day 16, is world Human Rights Day. In between these two important days, we acknowledge World AIDS Day and also the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women in Canada, which marks the anniversary of the Montréal massacre.

Gender-based violence can take any form: physical or emotional violence, sexualized violence, harassment, or discrimination. We need to consider what type of world that we would like our children and their children to grow up in — to take action, to put an end to gender-based violence, and to teach our kids about tempering their emotions, respecting others, doing good, and doing right.

We must do all we can to lower the staggering percentages of people who have experienced some form of violence, down as close to zero as possible, for future generations to live without fear. Violence against women and girls is a human rights violence that has been perpetuated for decades. It is

pervasive, but it is not inevitable unless we stay silent. Speak out and break the cycle of abuse.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to honour the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, and I want to thank my colleagues for their words today; they were very powerful.

I would like to read a poem called *Pocket-Sized Feminism* by Blythe Baird:

The only other girl at the party
is ranting about feminism. The audience:
a sea of rape jokes and snapbacks
and styrofoam cups and me. They gawk
at her mouth like it is a drain
clogged with too many opinions.
I shoot her an empathetic glance
and say nothing. This house is for
wallpaper women. What good
is wallpaper that speaks?
I want to stand up, but if I do,
whose coffee table silence
will these boys rest their feet on?
I want to stand up, but if I do,
what if someone takes my spot?
I want to stand up, but if I do,
what if everyone notices I've been
sitting this whole time? I am guilty
of keeping my feminism in my pocket
until it is convenient not to, like at poetry
slams or women's studies class.
There are days I want people to like me
more than I want to change the world.
There are days I forget we had to invent
nail polish to change color in drugged
drinks and apps to virtually walk us home
at night and mace disguised as lipstick.
Once, I told a boy I was powerful
and he told me to mind my own business.
Once, a boy accused me of practicing
misandry. You think you can take
over the world? And I said No,
I just want to see it. I just need
to know it is there for someone.
Once, my dad informed me sexism
is dead and reminded me to always
carry pepper spray in the same breath.
We accept this state of constant fear
as just another part of being a girl.
We text each other when we get home
safe and it doesn't occur to us that
our guy friends do not have to do the same.
You could saw a woman in half
and it would still be called a magic trick.
That's why you invited us here,
isn't it? Because there is no show

without a beautiful assistant?

We are surrounded by boys who hang up
our naked posters and fantasize
about choking us and watch movies
we get murdered in. We are the daughters
of men who warned us about the news
and the missing girls on the milk carton
and the sharp edge of the world.
They begged us to be careful. To be safe.
Then told our brothers to go out and play.

Mr. Speaker, we look forward to the day when this poem
doesn't hit so close to home.

Applause

In recognition of Adoption Awareness Month

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to acknowledge Adoption Awareness Month, which is recognized in a number of Canadian jurisdictions every November. Here in the Yukon, we also recognize Yukon Caregiver Appreciation Week in the third week of October. No matter the place or the month, the intent is the same: We want to acknowledge and thank people who have opened their hearts and their homes to a child or a youth in need.

Our communities recognize that there are times when a child or a youth cannot remain with their parents or guardians. Sometimes this is a temporary situation. In those cases, extended family caregivers and foster parents step in to provide the love and care that these children need in a time of turmoil.

Ultimately, though, our goal is to reunite children with their parents and families. We believe the best place for a child is with their family in their home community, if that is a possibility. Sadly, there are times when family reunification is not an option. We are so fortunate that there are people here in the territory who have made a huge leap into the unknown, taken a child more permanently into their lives, and formally adopted a child or children.

This selfless act is humbling, but we must also acknowledge the beauty and joy that fostering and adoption brings to the entire family.

Over the past decade, Yukon had made many positive changes to its child welfare system to help children and youth stay immersed in and connected with their families, communities, and cultures, no matter the situation. When children can no longer be with their parents, helping them to maintain these connections is our utmost priority, and I know that it is the priority of adoptive families and parents. The Department of Health and Social Services is working in full partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations and First Nation governments to ensure that all children involved in the child welfare system get the best possible care and support. We want to ensure that they are given the opportunity to grow up fully aware of who they are and where they come from so that they can mature and grow to their greatest potential.

At the core of this collaboration is the understanding that all children have the right to be emotionally, physically, and

spiritually safe and to feel loved, valued, and respected. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all adoptive parents, foster parents, and extended family caregivers in our territory. Some of us here in this very Legislative Assembly have these connections to families, and they are so important. These families' compassion, kindness, and generosity give children a warm and loving place to be and to grow into the best version of themselves.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition and the NDP to pay tribute to Adoption Awareness Month. The topic of adoption can be many things — moving, emotional, thought-provoking — and is a viable option to many families who struggle to have children or want to expand their family.

I know from stories and reports that it is a chore to navigate the checks and balances of adoption, but these checks and balances are to ensure the safety of a child and to consider other factors like age, location, and health of those involved. There are children of all ages waiting in foster homes or group homes for permanent placing or for adoption into a forever home.

With the uptake of adopting foreign children or children from war-torn countries, people do become aware of the plight and pain of so many children and youth.

To the birth mother or parents, it may be a difficult decision to give a child up for adoption, but they know in their hearts that it is for the best. Each mother has a unique story and we should not be so quick to judge. I am sure that they pray that this is a gift of hope to some family who wants a child.

There are also many orphaned children who are just waiting for a safe haven. In the past, orphanages were commonplace, and whether abandoned or had parents who died, children were taken care of in these institutions. I grew up with the comic strip *Little Orphan Annie* and watched the movie based on this Annie. The spunky, red-haired, freckled Annie was taken in by a rich businessman, Daddy Warbucks, who wanted to shore up his public image. She went from *It's the Hard Knock Life to Tomorrow* — “the sun'll come out tomorrow”. Of course, that is Hollywood, and as with any system, there are good and bad stories.

We, as a society, try to ensure what is best for children in care, and if the child is adoptable, every effort is made to ensure a match. Babies, children, and young teens don't have a choice. If they are not able to remain in their birth homes, many can be adopted into a home that will love them.

But the stats are not in their favour, Mr. Speaker. Of the thousands, only a small percentage are adopted each year. Whether domestic adoption, agency or private adoption, or kinship or stepchild adoption, arm yourself with the information that you will need. The care and well-being of children and youth has to be a top priority. They represent the now and the future.

The older I become, I know so many families that are tangled, interesting, and interwoven. I also know many families in the Yukon that have fostered and adopted little ones. I was raised by amazing foster parents who provided a stable, caring,

forever home, and they gave me every chance to achieve my full potential.

So, a huge thank you to all foster and adoptive parents for giving a young soul a chance to reach for the stars. You do not have to be blood-related to be a good parent; you only need the will to love and cherish a child.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 6 — response

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise in response to Petition No. 6, tabled in the House on November 10. I would like to thank the signatories who brought forth this important issue.

COVID-19 vaccinations remain our best tool available to protect the health and safety of Yukoners, and we encourage all eligible Yukoners to complete their primary series and boosters of the vaccination. Six days ago, we received the welcome news that Health Canada approved the COVID-19 vaccines for children ages five to 11. We expect to receive these vaccines in the Yukon within days, and the vaccination of children will begin in early December.

Our robust COVID-19 testing and surveillance strategy features a number of different tests. The Yukon's main testing stream involves the use of the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control's gold standard PCR testing technology, which can produce results within 48 hours of being received. Although wait times can be as high as five days, most results are available in less than three days.

We also use a rapid point-of-care testing program in specific scenarios to assist with testing and surveillance. The Abbott ID NOW is the main test used in our rapid point-of-care testing program and can produce results in 15 minutes. The test is used by our rapid-response testing teams to provide testing support in communities and other situations. COVID-19 testing is available in all communities through the community health centres and in Whitehorse at the COVID testing and assessment centre and at the drive-through testing centre.

As part of our comprehensive testing strategy, the lab-based GeneXpert testing device has been used in cases such as physicians, nurses, and teachers when they have symptoms of COVID-19 and a quicker result is required to ensure the health and safety of patients or school communities. Teachers and school administrative staff who are symptomatic can seek testing at the COVID testing and assessment centre. If they declare their profession, they will have their results processed using the GeneXpert so that they do not need to wait for the results from British Columbia. This practice ensures that, in urgent scenarios, symptomatic teachers and administrative staff can have timely access to results so that the appropriate steps can be taken to limit the spread of the disease or to minimize the length of time that someone needs to be away from work if their result is negative.

Rapid antigen testing is a tool that can be used in schools when recommended by the acting chief medical officer of health. At this time, the acting chief medical officer of health has not recommended introducing widespread use of rapid antigen testing in school settings and instead recommends strengthening existing public health measures and enhancing the testing capacity of the COVID testing and assessment centre. COVID-19 transmission is rare within schools, but we know that children are acquiring COVID-19 in the broader community.

On November 8, 2021, our government declared a state of emergency under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. Under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, masks are now required in all settings inside a school, including the classroom. When a case is identified in connection with a school community and there is a potential exposure, specific directions are provided to the school community, including staff, students, and families, by the Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit.

The priority for COVID-19 testing continues to be for symptomatic individuals. The office of the chief medical officer of health has not recommended widespread asymptomatic testing, except for in some very limited instances. Widespread asymptomatic testing can increase the pressures on our testing and contact-tracing abilities without benefiting our ability to control disease. A negative result using a rapid point-of-care test does not guarantee that an individual does not have COVID-19. Positive results must be verified using the gold standard PCR test in partnership with the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control and our other testing centres.

All Yukon schools have comprehensive COVID-19 policies in place and are following public health recommendations provided by the acting chief medical officer of health. Work is currently underway to assess the role of home testing for COVID-19 as part of the Yukon's COVID-19 testing strategy.

Our government will continue to work closely with the office of the chief medical officer of health and school administrators to ensure the health and safety of staff, students, and families. We agree that we must use every tool available to us to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and to mitigate the negative social and economic impacts —

Speaker: Order, please.

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(2.01) of the *Human Rights Act*, does designate Judy Hartling as Chief Adjudicator for a term of three years, effective immediately; and

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(2.01) of the *Human Rights Act*, does designate

Julie Jai as Deputy Chief Adjudicator for a term of three years, effective immediately.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 17(1) of the *Human Rights Act*, does appoint Samantha Dawson and Rosemary Rowlands to the Yukon Human Rights Commission for a three-year term, effective immediately; and

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 17(1) of the *Human Rights Act*, does appoint Keely Bass and reappoint Michael Dougherty to the Yukon Human Rights Commission for a three-year term, effective December 11, 2021.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(2) of the *Human Rights Act*, does reappoint Vincent Larochelle to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators for a term of three years, effective immediately.

Mr. Cathers: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to recognize that over one-fifth of Yukoners do not have a family doctor by:

(1) working with the Yukon Medical Association on improving recruitment and retention, including increasing incentive programs; and

(2) increasing the medical education bursary amount for each student, which is currently just half of what it was 15 years ago.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to use the digital information signs to display actual highways information.

Mr. Istchenko: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support the development of seniors housing in Haines Junction by taking the following actions:

(1) initiating consultations with the St. Elias Seniors Society, the Village of Haines Junction, and the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations on the construction of phase 2 of seniors housing in Haines Junction;

(2) including a line in the 2021-22 budget for this project; and

(3) completing consultation and design of this seniors housing project in 2022.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to move quickly to develop a Yukon forestry strategy in consultation with Yukon First Nations, the wood products sector, and other stakeholders with goals including:

- (1) providing long-term tenure for wood supply;
- (2) fixing the permitting system to address delays;
- (3) improving community protection from wildfire through planned harvest in and near communities; and
- (4) making effective use of locally grown trees for biomass energy production.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to work with the communities of Beaver Creek, Burwash Landing, Destruction Bay, Haines Junction, Canyon Creek, Champagne, Mendenhall, and Takhini to improve the current standard of highway vegetation control, including ensuring that contracts are issued early enough in the year to allow brushing to be done before the end of the construction season.

Ms. White: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT it is the opinion of this House that the Government of British Columbia should honour the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* by intervening in the ongoing incursion and occupation of Wet'suwet'en territory by Coastal GasLink work crews and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to impose a moratorium on mining of undisturbed wetlands until the completion of land use planning and the establishment of ecological thresholds.

Ms. Blake: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House provide the public with the number of Yukoners under the age of 18 who have tested positive for COVID-19.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to relieve the backlog of scheduled infant vaccinations by requesting the help of the Canadian Red Cross to administer vaccines in the Yukon.

Ms. Tredger: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure that unvaccinated Yukon University students living in student housing are not evicted due to a COVID-19 vaccine mandate.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Quill Creek timber harvest plan

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Winter is now in full swing, and it's important for us to make sure that all Yukoners stay safe and warm.

We recognize that wood supply is very important to Yukon communities, and many Yukoners rely on wood to heat their homes. We know that there has been some uncertainty around securing adequate fuel-wood supply, but we want to reassure Yukoners that there is enough wood for this winter and many winters going forward.

During the summer months, harvesting capacity is typically lower than during the winter, which is when the majority of harvesting occurs. It's a busy time for harvesters. Anyone who is eligible and has applied for a commercial permit has now either received a permit or is in the process of receiving a permit. It is great to see this activity as Yukoners prepare for the winter ahead.

I am here to announce that we will be moving forward to the next stage of approving the Quill Creek timber harvest plan. The project scope is for the harvesting of 136,726 cubic metres of beetle-killed spruce and 26,429 cubic metres of green spruce over a 15-year time frame. This is more than 70,000 cords of wood for our homes.

This is important progress being made to ensure that the Yukon continues to have a sustainable timber supply to meet the growing demands that we are currently seeing here in the territory. I would like to thank the Yukon Wood Products Association for meeting with the forest resources branch this summer to express their concerns about fuel-wood supply and, in particular, their concern about the time that it was taking for the Quill Creek project to go through the assessment process.

Now that the Government of Yukon has accepted the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board's recommendations, our next step is to revise the timber harvest plan to be consistent with these recommendations. Harvesting in Quill Creek can commence in the beginning of December to get more fuel wood into the homes of those who need it. Our government believes that forest management planning is a key strategy for adapting to our rapidly changing climate and the increasing risk of wildfire, for supporting our local economy to help heat our homes and buildings with a renewable resource, and for incorporating sustainability objectives within our harvest strategies.

We apply an adaptive approach in the planning of harvest areas to reflect the individual needs of communities and the ongoing economic demands and to ensure the health of our forests. Planning new harvesting areas can be a complex procedure, and we honour the collaborative process that considers multiple values. We are working with the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board to address concerns of the forestry assessment process and timelines. We're also working to make the planning and assessment process more efficient so that harvesters, homeowners, and businesses have adequate supply going forward.

Implementing the Quill Creek timber harvest plan will provide long-term opportunities for commercial fuel-wood harvesting and help to ease pressures around future supply. Within the scope of this project, beetle-killed spruce and a small portion of green spruce will be harvested to support

Yukon's wood supply. We are eager to implement this harvest plan as it will provide more certainty to Yukoners.

Through the access management plan, we will continue to work with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and the Alsek Renewable Resources Council. We are also working closely with First Nations to discuss the broader considerations of forest management across the Yukon. Forestry officials are expanding personal fuel-wood areas and making maps available that will allow the public to locate salvage wood from FireSmart areas.

These additional measures are being put in place to secure future supply while continuing to work with industry and fuel-wood suppliers to ensure that Yukoners have the wood they need. We are moving in the right direction to ensure Yukoners have local fuel wood to stay warm this winter and in future years.

Mr. Istchenko: Winter has certainly settled into the Yukon. Many Yukoners who rely on firewood to help heat their homes have already stocked up for the winter and, as we have learned, an unfortunate amount of that firewood will come from outside the Yukon. In August, the Yukon Wood Products Association had to go to the media to raise their concerns about this. In an August 11 *Yukon News* article, the executive director of the Yukon Wood Products Association said — and I quote: “Our licensees or operators had wood until March of this year. When we started the process, it was inconceivable that we would be sitting here three years later ... and still looking at no permits coming out of that thing for five years due to the administrative processes.” He went on to say: “From our perspective, the problem is the administrative processes are just so complicated. The way it’s working was the way it was designed to work. And the way it was designed to work isn’t working for us, as an industry.”

Mr. Speaker, while we are glad to see the development that the minister has announced today, there is still a lot of work to be done, and we are concerned that the government isn’t moving fast enough to address it. In my riding alone, there are hundreds of thousands of cubic metres of wood that could be harvested. My colleague in Watson Lake has the same story in that area, but unfortunately, as the Yukon Wood Products Association noted, we’ve seen no progress in addressing the administrative, bureaucratic process over the past five years. I would be interested to see what the minister is doing about that.

According to some industry representatives whom I’ve chatted with, the harvestability of our wood in my riding is starting to rot, and there are not many years left of it. In January 2016, the previous Yukon Party government finalized the Yukon biomass strategy, and we still very much believe in the goals set out in that plan because we believe in the potential of a strong wood resource industry here in the Yukon and think that forestry and fuel wood both offer huge economic and environmental opportunities for us.

So, while we are pleased to see development, we remain concerned that this has taken so long to get here. There is so much more work to do. We hope that the Yukon government

agrees and starts to move more quickly to support this important industry.

Ms. White: Biomass energy use can be a win-win for greenhouse gas reduction and climate change adaptation. Yukon’s road map for climate action, *Our Clean Future*, stresses the importance of using our local renewable biomass sources for heating as ways that the Yukon can reduce our emissions and support the local economy. But, Mr. Speaker, this will only be effective if there is an ability to harvest lumber in the territory.

I, like many, am breathing a sigh of relief knowing that harvest permits will soon be released to Yukon’s woodcutters in the Quill Creek area. With the implementation of the Quill Creek harvest plan, Yukon will have long-term opportunities that will allow commercial timber harvesters to plan, and that will allow Yukoners the ability to purchase biomass heating fuel that is both grown and harvested locally and is hopefully affordable.

This long-term plan is important if we are going to meet commitments in *Our Clean Future*, like installing renewable heat sources such as biomass energy in Government of Yukon buildings by 2030 to create long-term demand for renewable heating and contribute, as it says, to a 30-percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that this new plan took time, but I’m hopeful that, for future planning, we don’t find ourselves short of timber fuel again.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I’m happy to rise to agree with the members opposite.

First of all, I will note that the Minister of Highways and Public Works is working with the Yukon Wood Products Association, talking about biomass in buildings. I know that he has been in dialogue with them directly. I understand that this is progressing well.

Second of all, I will say that the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources — the direction that I gave to the department, the forest resources branch, was to please work in support of the Yukon Wood Products Association because this is really important on several fronts, as the members opposite and I noted. It’s smart to prepare against the impacts of climate change and the risk of wildfire. It’s also smart because it’s a locally grown economy and it’s a renewable economy, as long as we harvest sustainably.

I asked for that work to be redoubled over the past fall, late summer, fall, and up to today. I just want to say thank you to the forest resources branch. They really hustled. They did a terrific job. They got some quick cut blocks out around Fox Lake and around Haines Junction. This was important in the interim. We sat down with YESAB. We had a good conversation with them. We talked about how to keep processes moving. I want to thank them for that work.

It had been slow to get to Quill Creek, but they worked to get it over the finish line, and our team has been working hard to get the decision document done. I am very glad for all of that.

I will say that somewhere today, I think, we are putting out a news release about the Dawson regional area and an annual allowable cut. That cut is going up to 28,000 cubic metres per year. Again, we are working with the First Nation and working with the renewable resources council. Those are important steps, and this is all in the vein that I think all of us are agreeing on here, which is that local wood supply is important.

Again, I will continue to work on this because we believe that this needs to be strong going forward into the future. The branch has been working to try to make sure that there is a continuous supply over time and that we don't end up in a situation again where we were waiting for this large cut block to make its way through the system. That work is ongoing.

I have sat down with several chiefs of First Nations to talk about the broader picture, and I have requested that we discuss it at the Yukon Forum.

It is an important piece of the puzzle. I agree with the members opposite. Again, I want to say thank you to all at the Yukon Wood Products Association and to the forest resources branch for working to get this supply online for Yukoners.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Mayo drinking water reservoir

Ms. Van Bibber: This fall, I visited the Village of Mayo and had a chance to tour the faulty water reservoir that has become the subject of a court case between the Department of Community Services and a contractor.

Can the minister give us an update on the court case and tell us what the government is doing to assist the Village of Mayo with their drinking water needs in the meantime?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yes, I was up in Mayo this summer as well. I have toured the water facility in question. It is indeed a serious issue for the community of Mayo. I am not going to comment on the status of the court case on the floor of the Legislature, but I am going to say that I am working with the community of Mayo to make sure that their water supply is kept safe and whole over the coming winter months. It is an issue that we have to deal with.

Ms. Van Bibber: We witnessed first-hand the steady stream of water flowing from the reservoir and the visible bulging of the tanks. The reservoir is leaking so badly and the department is so concerned about the entire facility bursting that they have set up a wall of super sacks to protect the rest of the village from flooding in case the reservoirs fail. While the sandbags are a precaution, they certainly aren't a long-term solution.

What is the government doing to prepare for the structural integrity of the reservoirs, should they fail?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The tanks in question are very similar — I am told — to tanks that were successfully deployed in Faro. The fact that they are in such poor shape, so soon after construction, is certainly a concern to the community and to me and my officials. We are working with the community of Mayo. They are going to have to be replaced, so we are working with

the community of Mayo to make sure that we get new tanks installed.

Ms. Van Bibber: We realize that these court cases can take some time, so we hope that the longer term solution to address the safety concerns of the current reservoirs will be found soon. We also understand that the Department of Community Services is still managing the project and dealing with the ongoing concerns.

Can the minister confirm that the department is absorbing all of the costs associated with the management of this ongoing issue and that the Village of Mayo isn't bearing any additional operation and maintenance costs associated with this unfortunate issue?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yes, indeed, it is an unfortunate situation. It's certainly not a situation that we wanted to be in after spending millions of dollars replacing Mayo's water infrastructure. As I said, I have been up in Mayo; I toured the very same facility. I have seen the state of the water and how we have a flow of water from those tanks. I have seen the status.

We have been discussing alternatives with the community of Mayo. I do know that the community of Mayo is a small community. It has its own challenges as far as its finances, and we will work with the community to make sure that it keeps its water supply and actually has the capability to deal with the issue.

Question re: Biomass heating fuel

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, on November 17 of this year, the Minister of Highways and Public Works told the Legislature about the installation of a biomass system at Elijah Smith school as an exciting project that will reduce the school's use of propane and reduce emissions. The previous minister, during his ministerial statement, talked about this.

However, the Yukon Wood Products Association has recently expressed concern about this project and the development of the tender for it. They say they are worried that it is being stacked to ensure that the primary fuel source will end up being imported wood pellets from the south, rather than locally harvested wood.

Can the minister tell us what he is doing to ensure that the installation of a biomass system actually supports our local, made-in-Yukon biomass heating fuel industry?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: In response to this question, as the member opposite indicated, the Yukon government is excited to be moving forward with key actions for renewable energy, including the installation of a new biomass heating system at the Elijah Smith Elementary School in Whitehorse.

The biomass system will offset the building's propane use, reducing emissions by an estimated 130 tonnes each year. This is one of the many steps that the Yukon government is taking to meet our goals of *Our Clean Future*. In July 2021, we engaged with biomass contractors to discuss our plans for the Elijah Smith school biomass project and to listen to their suggestions and feedback.

A tender for the installation of the biomass system closed in October, and the department is reviewing bids.

Thank you, and I look forward to subsequent questions.

Mr. Istchenko: I don't think I got an answer to the first question I asked, which was: What is the minister doing to ensure that the installation of the biomass system actually supports our local made-in-Yukon biomass heating fuel industry?

The Yukon Wood Products Association has made it clear to the government, over a series of meetings, that they want the contract structured in a way that will actually help develop a biomass industry in the Yukon. Unfortunately, according to an e-mail sent to the government last week, they feel their recommendations have been completely ignored.

Going forward, will the minister agree to consult and actually listen to the Yukon Wood Products Association before developing these types of tenders?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I am certainly prepared to meet with the Yukon Wood Products Association, although I may not be the primary person on this file, but if I am, I will.

We have heard from industry that there is a strong desire to tender our biomass projects through a build-operate-maintain model. This gives industry the opportunity to determine which systems they would be operating and maintaining, while the government invests in the system. It also allows fuel suppliers the time to source the heating materials while construction is occurring. It allows the development of a source-to-service biomass industry.

The Elijah Smith Elementary School biomass system is the first Yukon government biomass project that gives private industry the opportunity to build, operate, maintain, and fuel the biomass system. Several members of the Yukon Wood Products Association made key contributions to the procurement of this project through their request-for-information process undertaken earlier this summer.

The answer to the member opposite's question: We are always prepared to meet with the Yukon Wood Products Association and listen to their input on this project.

Mr. Istchenko: We know that, this winter, a significant amount of Yukoners' firewood will be coming from outside the territory due to Liberal inaction, and now, according to the Yukon Wood Products Association, the Elijah Smith school biomass system will rely on wood pellets shipped from the south. The establishment and growth of our local forestry industry, which the members keep saying they are trying to do here, requires support from the government to create demand. This will help our local economy.

Will the Minister of Highways and Public Works agree to work directly with the Yukon Wood Products Association and find ways to use government procurement to further support this local forest industry?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yes, I think that the answer is yes, of course, we will continue to meet with the Yukon Wood Products Association and harvesters. Economic Development is in on these meetings. We have Highways and Public Works in on these meetings. We also have the Department of Community Services, because we are talking about wildfire risk and how to reduce that wildfire risk. So, yes, this requires us to meet with the Yukon Wood Products Association and all

stakeholders on this. I said earlier that I am looking to raise this topic at the Yukon Forum. I think that it is important.

Some of the wood that came here every year is coming from just across the border, so we have some Yukon harvesters who harvest in British Columbia, across the border. I am not that worried about that; I am worried about wood coming from far afield, and I appreciate the Yukon Wood Products Association's concerns about making sure that this is local and sustainable. I agree with them — we agree with them; we will work with them.

Question re: Mining project oversight

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon's largest industry is mining, but it's also one of the least regulated. This summer, the public was made aware of Rio Tinto's \$25-million investment in the Casino mine project. As one of the largest mining conglomerates in the world, Rio Tinto has a less than glowing reputation. In Australia, the company recently blew up a 46,000-year-old sacred indigenous site. In Papua, New Guinea, Rio Tinto abandoned its mine, leaving behind millions of tonnes of waste that poisoned rivers and entire communities downstream. The company has faced little to no consequences for these violations. To Rio Tinto, a \$25-million investment is chump change. To Yukoners, it raises concerns.

Is the minister aware of Rio Tinto's violation of environmental and human rights across its mine sites?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I think that it is incredibly important that all of the mining companies that work here in the Yukon do so with an understanding that we require them to have environmental responsibility, social responsibility, and governance responsibility. That means working with our local First Nations; that means working with communities. No matter which company it is that comes here, that initiates work in the Yukon, or continues to work in the Yukon, that is where we are going with them.

I will also say that we are very happy to be advancing successor legislation. I was happy yesterday to understand that the Official Opposition also supports that work. That is terrific. That work is ongoing right now. I think, this week, we had another meeting of the steering committee. I get reports back fairly frequently. That is important, because our legislation is out of date, and we want to update it. It's about making sure that, when companies work here in the Yukon, they do so in a way that serves our environment, serves our communities, and leaves no bad legacy that the Yukon has to deal with.

Ms. White: I am sure that the minister is well aware that investments like these have strings attached. Rio Tinto has many rights as an investor. They will appoint a member to the Casino projects technical committee and will have an observer at all board meetings. Casino is a massive project. While it's in its very early stage, aerial images of the site show cleared-out roads, trailers, equipment, and even an airstrip; yet, somehow, the security deposit that the Yukon government holds is a whopping \$672. This is the money that the Yukon government requests as a deposit, just in case projects don't go as planned and are abandoned. Mr. Speaker, \$672 barely even covers one trip up there.

Can the minister explain in what world \$672 would be enough to clean up any part of a mine site?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Of course, the way that we assess how much money to hold as a security is based on the reality that is on the ground. If there were a mine there, yeah, of course, that would not be enough — absolutely, it would not be enough, but there is no mine there. So, security — the way that I have had it described to me by the department and the officials is that they assess the situation on the ground; they work diligently to update those assessments, as changes happen on the mine site and also based on — just over time — doing reassessments, and at all times, that security is calculated to make sure that it will be there for Yukoners.

I know we had a mistake that was made previously for the Wolverine Mine. We have inherited that mistake, and we will have to address it here. I do not ever want to end up in that situation. So, what I have asked the department to do is to make sure that we are diligent around assessing for securities.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, it's a concern that the minister is suggesting that Rio Tinto's security deposit, that is less than one-month's rent deposit for a basement apartment, would be adequate to clear up roads or trailers or even an airstrip.

So, Rio Tinto has already left a trail of destruction behind them. Norway — the country of Norway called them out for — and I quote: "... grossly unethical conduct..."

In Canada, they've locked out unions and exposed hundreds of workers to toxic levels of lead and radiation. It's not just investing in Casino — Rio Tinto is spreading across the north. This company is used to sitting in court over worker abuse, environmental damage, and human rights violations. But Rio Tinto, like many multinational companies, has deep pockets, and this government — this Liberal government — is no stranger to mining money. They have accepted thousands in corporate donations over the years.

How does the minister plan to regulate big mining players when, at the same time, his own party accepts cash from the industry?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I expect us to secure and regulate all mining, based on the values that I just talked about in my previous answer and in the first answer. When I sat down with mining companies and when I sat down with the chamber and with the industry and when I sat down with environmental groups, I have talked about the direction that we need to head. It is environmental, social, and governance responsibility. There is an acronym that mining industry uses; it's ESG. This is critical.

I think that mining is critical. If we want to talk about transforming our energy economy, we need copper; we need cobalt; we need zinc. We are going to need minerals for our economy — in particular, for transforming our energy economy, and we critically need that mining to be done responsibly. This is the key. It is to make sure that mining is done appropriately.

I will say that any company that comes into this territory to work will have to abide by this scrutiny, producing security to make sure that mining is safe and secure here in the territory.

Question re: Faro area mining claims and leases

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, a quote from an August 2021 Yukon government news release stated: "The Government of Yukon, Government of Canada, Ross River Dena Council and private entity Broden Mining have agreed on the basic terms and framework for the sale of mining claims and leases on the Vangorda plateau..."

Of course, this is part of the property that makes up the old Faro mine site.

On October 26, based on industry feedback, we asked why there wasn't a competitive process used to transfer the properties on the Vangorda Plateau, as has been done with past deals, such as Keno Hill and Mount Nanson.

At the time, the minister wasn't sure. He didn't know why this was done and was going to look into it with Canada. Can the minister tell us if other companies besides Broden Mining were given the opportunity to submit proposals for these claims?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I can say that the governments of Canada and Yukon are working closely with the Ross River Dena Council and the Tse Zul Development Corporation as they move to acquire and assess the development potential of the Vangorda lands within the Ross River and Kaska Dena Council's asserted traditional territory.

I think this is an important new partnership, and the opportunity it provides for responsible mining in a brownfield area, meaning Faro, is quite the historic legacy. It does need to be cleaned up, and if you can have some activity there right now and clean it up at the same time, you can convert an environmental liability into an opportunity.

This partnership has the potential to bring real benefits to Ross River and nearby communities. Supporting this process is another important step toward reconciliation with the Ross River Dena Council and the Kaska. It provides a significant opportunity for renewed socio-economic and cultural growth in the area.

The Vangorda sale framework provides an opportunity for Ross River Dena Council to have a lead role in the project and to directly select a partnership arrangement that aligns with their visions and values.

I'll continue my response, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and just for the minister, what we heard from other industry players was why there wasn't a competitive process to sell these claims and leases in the Vangorda Plateau. Again, during debate on October 26, the minister said — and I will quote: "... there have been many meetings with Broden Mining Ltd. over the past several years..." He said that these meetings took place with Broden Mining and a predecessor company called Oxygen Capital. So, can the minister tell us how many meetings were held, when they started, and when discussions between the Liberal government began with respect to the Faro project?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to turn back to the department to try to get some sense of timeline. I just want to be clear that, while I have the responsibility for Energy, Mines and Resources, the meetings that I was referring

to were between the department, the mining company, and Ross River Dena Council.

I also want to say that the process, as I understand it, and our involvement in it are to make sure that whatever is happening in this area is going to live within our regulatory framework here in the territory, but Vangorda and Faro are a federal government responsibility and they have the lead in working on this file. I did offer, when we were here in Committee of the Whole, to turn back and have a conversation with Canada to find out their process. I would like to welcome Minister Wilkinson into the role. I have had one brief meeting with him. I have another meeting coming up with him. I am working to get that information for members opposite.

I am happy to say that, in process here, the department had been working with — or had some meetings with — the mining company and I'll work to get specific information for the members opposite.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, just to remind the minister again that, from that news release in August, the Government of Yukon was one of the signatories to the framework agreement, so there is a role and a presence of the government with respect to this particular project.

So, Mr. Speaker, in December 2017, the Liberals held a high-profile fundraiser in Vancouver in a private suite at a hockey game. A number of industry members have given us a copy of an e-mail sent in November of that year by the founder and CEO of Broden Mining in which he was promoting this major Liberal fundraising event. This individual was also a partner of Oxygen Capital.

So, can the minister tell us: Is the CEO of Broden Mining still promoting fundraisers for the Yukon Liberal Party, and if not, when did he stop doing so?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, we are involved in the project. I just stood up and said so. It is to make sure that, as the project moves forward, it is appropriate within our regulatory framework here in the territory. That is our responsibility, and we will carry out that responsibility.

I am afraid that I don't know any questions about the specifics of a mining company and their contributions to us, as a political party, but I believe that there are mining companies and other companies that have donated to us as a party and other parties or unions —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Streicker: To the Third Party — okay, Mr. Speaker.

What I am trying to say is that I don't think these things are in any way related. I believe that there is a role for Energy, Mines and Resources to make sure that, when mining companies come into the territory, they do so appropriately, and that is what we will do with this mining company. I am happy that there is work happening on a brownfield site. It is good news for Yukoners that we will see a way to start cleaning up Faro and maybe get some opportunity for the Ross River Dena Council out of it at the same time.

Question re: Political party fundraising

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, a 2018 *National Post* story about political fundraising states that the Yukon Premier says his party has not held any out-of-territory fundraising events. However, we know that there was a 2017 Liberal hockey fundraiser that my colleague just referenced. The \$20,000 raised for the Liberals at this hockey box represents 40 percent of their total fundraising in 2017, but the Premier told the *National Post* that his party does not hold out-of-territory fundraising events.

Can the Premier confirm how many out-of-territory events his party has actually had since he made those claims to the *National Post*, and does he have more planned?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yes, we absolutely do have more planned. I can get some information for the members opposite from our executive. I don't have that information on the floor of the Legislative Assembly right now.

Mr. Cathers: Well, the Premier didn't say how many events they have had, contrary to what he told the *National Post*. In the 2017 financing report for the Liberals, they originally did not report \$20,000 in corporate donations that they were given at this hockey game. That year, the legal filing deadline for their report was April 3, 2018.

It wasn't until the former NDP leader asked about this hockey box fundraiser on April 9 and 10 that anyone other than the Liberals were aware of it. After being caught hiding this fundraising information from Elections Yukon, the Liberals were then forced to release it.

To quote from Elections Yukon's report: "The Yukon Liberal Party filed an annual revenue return by the filing deadline..." — which was April 3 — "... but subsequently reported that 10 in kind contributions had been omitted. A revised annual revenue return was filed on April 20, 2018."

Can the Liberals tell us why they originally tried to hide the \$20,000 that was fundraised at this hockey event from Elections Yukon and from Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I believe that this issue was addressed by the executive and all of this was laid to rest in those interviews.

Mr. Cathers: The Premier can try to dismiss it, but I remind him that his party did not comply with the law in filing the return. Of course, this wasn't the last time that the Liberals have hidden political fundraising information from the public. In 2020, the Liberals hid over \$100,000 in sources of revenue from the public, using a loophole in the *Elections Act*.

Will the Liberals agree to fix this loophole?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think that we have had an awful lot of conversations about fundraising on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. What the member opposite is drumming up right now is old news, and I believe that our executive has addressed these issues in the past. We have talked about the difference between us not piggy-backing and holding the mining industry hostage at the Roundup, as the Yukon Party used to do. If you wanted access to the ministers back then, you had to jump on the party yacht, which was quite an interesting approach from the previous party.

We have an excellent relationship with the mining industry, and we're glad to see that. It talks to the mining companies recognizing that, if you are going to do business in the Yukon, you have to consider the environment, you have to

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Member for Lake Laberge, on a point of order.

Mr. Cathers: The Premier, in inventing facts and casting aspersions, seems to be contrary to Standing Order 19(i) and, I would suggest as well, Standing Order 19(g). I would ask you to have him retract his comments and apologize to this House.

Speaker: Government House Leader, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Standing Order 19(i) talks about abusive or insulting language, including sexist or violent language, in a context likely to create disorder. I don't see any disorder here, so I think that this is a dispute among members.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: There is no point of order. This is a dispute between members. Please continue.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, we do have a great rapport with the mining industry here. We have instructed anybody we have talked to in the mining industry that they need to have a great partnership with First Nations, they need to consider the environment, and they need to consider community. That's our relationship with the mining community.

I think that the members opposite are a little upset — when, in their final years, mining was leaving the Yukon. We were in a recession. Since we came into power, we have seen more mining happening in the Yukon with companies that consider the environment and have an excellent rapport with indigenous relations. A lot of the stuff that is being drummed up by the member opposite is a revisionist history of some questions that they asked the last time we sat in the Legislative Assembly. We have answered those questions in the past and so we are already on record with those answers.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 7: *Act to Amend the Family Property and Support Act (2021)* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 7, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that Bill No. 7, entitled *Act to Amend the Family Property and Support Act (2021)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 7, entitled *Act to Amend the Family Property and Support Act (2021)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the opportunity to address the Legislative Assembly with respect to Bill No. 7. Thank you to the members of the Assembly for their contributions to the debate with respect to this bill. I will now take just a few moments to revisit the amendment that we are proposing in Bill No. 7, which is entitled *Act to Amend the Family Property and Support Act (2021)*, and just speak briefly to implementation.

As mentioned in my earlier remarks, the *Family Property and Support Act* does not currently reflect best practices across Canada and certainly not here in the territory. The Government of Yukon is committed to ensuring that our legislation keeps up with the changing realities of Yukon and Canadian society. The proposed amendment will allow greater access to spousal support for former common-law spouses by removing the time limit for spousal support applications. The proposed amendment will ensure that former common-law spouses will not be disadvantaged in comparison with married spouses by short time limits that currently apply only to them for applications for spousal support.

The Government of Yukon is pleased to bring forward this amendment that will modernize family support legislation in the Yukon and mirrors legislation in other jurisdictions across Canada. We know that passing this legislation is a progressive step forward, one that is necessary for enabling former common-law spouses to have the same supports as married spouses, which fulfills our obligation to ensure that Yukon legislation is inclusive and accessible — just one of the many ways that we have done that.

With respect to implementation, we are proposing to bring the amendment into force during the winter of 2022. This timeline will allow the Department of Justice to communicate the upcoming changes to the public, to the Law Society of Yukon, and to others so that they may prepare accordingly. Of course, if Bill No. 7 is to pass this House, that is the plan.

The proposed amendment will enable us to ensure that family support legislation in the Yukon Territory meets the needs of today's Yukoners and protects their interests.

In conclusion, I recommend that members of this Assembly support the passing of Bill No. 7, the *Act to Amend the Family Property and Support Act (2021)*.

I would like to take one last opportunity to thank the individuals who have worked on this bill, bringing it before the Legislative Assembly. It is a small amendment. It will have a big effect on Yukoners, as we heard in the debate earlier. There is a large percentage of Yukoners who live in common-law relationships and this has been a significant issue for them. Either they have had to work very quickly to make sure that their rights are protected or, perhaps more importantly, they have not had their rights protected and they have been ineligible for applications for spousal support through no operation of their own, but simply through the fact that our law was outdated and did not reflect modern family situations and was frankly unfair. I know that there will be support for this, I hope, in the Legislative Assembly so that this can be corrected.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, we have indicated our support previously. I would just note that, while not out of order, the minister's speech was basically repeating what she has already told this House a couple times and it's unfortunate, as we hit the dwindling days of this Fall Sitting, that the government is so desperate to not debate the Department of Health and Social Services that they are repeating themselves on other legislation.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, as indicated by my colleague, the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, the Yukon NDP will be supporting this motion.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, she will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry that at least one of the members opposite thought that my two-minute address to the Legislative Assembly was too long, but I appreciate the indicated support.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for third reading of Bill No. 7 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 7 has passed this House.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Motions re appearance of witnesses

Committee of the Whole Motion No. 4

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 25, 2021, Mark Pike, chair of the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, and Kurt Dieckmann, president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions relating to the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Streicker:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 25, 2021, Mark Pike, chair of the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, and Kurt Dieckmann, president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions relating to Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board.

Committee of the Whole Motion No. 4 agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 6, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021)*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Deputy Chair: Order, please. I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill No. 6: Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021)

Deputy Chair: The matter before the committee is general debate on Bill No. 6, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021)*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, I would like to ask my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly to welcome two of the Department of Justice officials who will be assisting us in our conversation today. They are Jeff Simons and Andrea Bailey, both immediately to my right. I would also like to welcome them here. I think that this is Jeff's first time here in the Legislative Assembly in this role, and I really appreciate their support in bringing this bill forward and also all the work that they do at the department that does not involve them being here today, which is extensive, and I would like to take the opportunity to thank them while they are here in person.

Deputy Chair, I do have some remarks. I made some earlier upon second reading with respect to Bill No. 6, which is the *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021)*. I reviewed legislative changes that we are considering for this bill in my earlier remarks, but today I would like to discuss the bill in just a bit more detail as well as the context for these changes. To begin, I would like to review the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* not section by section but briefly and how it allows for the safer communities and neighbourhoods unit to operate.

I think that it is important for Yukoners to know some of the detail with respect to how this piece of legislation operates practically in the world and how the folks who work in the SCAN unit are regulated by this legislation and work to keep Yukoners safe. This legislation was enacted in May 2006 and is administered and enforced by a team of investigators.

They are known as the "SCAN unit" — Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods. The unit responds to complaints from citizens about activities that are having adverse effects on their communities and neighbourhoods. It is important to emphasize that the unit responds to complaints. They don't have their own investigative powers outside of that complaint process.

The act enables the SCAN unit to investigate complaints received from the public and to take action when illegal or dangerous activity is occurring on a local property and that activity is negatively affecting the neighbourhood or the community. It could be that one of those factors is happening. There could be illegal action, or there could be something that is negatively affecting it that is not subject to the SCAN act. Both of those conditions must be happening and occurring in order for the SCAN unit to become involved.

The *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* defines the types of activity that the SCAN unit can investigate. As we heard earlier in the conversations, those are defined as a "specified use". "Specified use" includes the illegal sale of liquor and other contraventions of the *Liquor Act*; contraventions of the federal *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*, the federal *Cannabis Act*, and Yukon's *Cannabis Control and Regulation Act*; the use or consumption of intoxicants; prostitution and activities related to prostitution. Those are the current specified uses in the legislation.

It is important for me to note that the entire process is complaint-driven, as I have emphasized, and works through civil remedies, rather than criminal cases. This is not about criminal charges. These are civil remedies set out in the *Safer*

Communities and Neighbourhoods Act. Furthermore, the legislation and the work undertaken by the SCAN unit are strictly property-based; it is not person-based. It has to do with the use of property.

The SCAN unit may resolve a complaint by addressing the problem informally with the tenant and/or property owner. They can address the issues by sending a formal warning letter or an agreement to cease illegal activities. Those are set out in the act. They can serve an eviction notice issued by the landlord, if the situation involves a landlord and a tenant, or they can apply to the Yukon Supreme Court to close the property for up to 90 days through a community safety order. It should be noted that the vast majority of situations involving the SCAN unit are dealt with by addressing the problem informally or by sending a warning letter.

I have some statistics I hope we will get into later.

Moving on to the bill before us today, we are specifically seeking to amend section 1(1) of the act to expand the definition of "specified use" to include illegal activities that are related to child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, to gangs and criminal organizations, and to firearms. This amendment will allow the SCAN unit to investigate and take action on these additional matters, or specified uses, with the ultimate objective of increasing public safety in Yukon communities.

It is important to recognize that the amendment focuses only on illegal activities and will not encroach on the rights of law-abiding citizens.

I would like to spend a bit of time discussing why these activities are being included in the proposed amendment. I think it's important for Members of the Legislative Assembly and for Yukoners to understand why this is being sought at this time.

In relation to illegal firearms activity, the Commissioner of Firearms for the RCMP's Canadian firearms program reports that the number of firearms seized in the Yukon between 2015 and 2019 is 101. Specifically, there were 18 in 2015; 16 in 2016; 20 in 2017; 17 in 2018; and 30 in 2019.

In relation to child sexual exploitation, Statistics Canada reports that there was a total of 141 reported sexual violations against children between 2015 and 2020 in the Yukon. Specifically, there were 26 in 2015, with about the same average in each of the other years. In 2019, it was again 26; in 2020, there were 27 such reports.

Finally, when looking at organized crime in the territory, the SCAN unit reports that approximately 31 percent of their investigations in 2019 are believed to have involved gangs or criminal organizations.

The reason this is absolutely critical is that it is a tool — remembering that it's complaint-driven — it has to adversely affect the safety of a community or a neighbourhood, but it is one tool in the toolbox to address the opioid crisis. The gang activity is almost always involving drugs, and those drugs are getting into the hands of Yukoners and ultimately killing them.

In total, the SCAN unit received 61 complaints in 2017; 79 complaints in 2018; it jumps to 92 complaints in 2019; and 105 complaints in 2020 — remembering that this is about gang and organized crime activity.

Forty-three percent of the complaints in 2020 were related to suspected organized crime. This shows a significant increase from 31 percent in 2019 and 26 percent in both 2018 and 2017, and 31 percent of the complaints in 2019 were related to suspected organized crime, which shows an increase from 26.2 percent in 2017 to 26.3 percent — let's try that again. That shows an increase from 26.2 percent in 2017 to 26.3 percent in 2018. So, a significant increase in 2019 and 2020.

It's also important to note that the SCAN unit has received over 1,000 complaints since the act came into force in 2006. The number of complaints received by the SCAN unit continues to increase annually.

Just before I finish, I would just like to highlight how SCAN works with partner agencies — again, important for the Members of the Legislative Assembly to know, but also important for Yukoners to understand.

SCAN has entered into agreements with nine Yukon First Nation governments. These agreements support First Nation community safety. I'm proud, on a personal note — I want to say, back in 2013 or 2014, when one of the Yukon First Nations first came and spoke about a partnership with the SCAN unit, I had the pleasure of working on that case in concert with the Yukon First Nation government and the operation of the SCAN unit for the purposes of making their community safer. Since that time, nine Yukon First Nation governments have entered into agreements with respect to community safety and are supporting that operation of SCAN as one tool in the toolbox for them to use in working to keep their communities safe.

Not only is SCAN working with First Nation governments, they are engaging with communities outside of Whitehorse on a regular basis. It is complicated for the investigators to do that, because communities in the Yukon are relatively small and tight-knit, but they are also seeking tools to help make their community safer and are reaching out to SCAN on a regular basis. SCAN has seen an increasing number of complaints from the communities, which demonstrates the work that the unit has been doing to build relationships with Yukoners, as well as a strong need for this service. It also indicates the growing sophistication of the SCAN unit and the opportunity for their work to be meaningful in communities and neighborhoods.

SCAN also works with our policing partners at the RCMP, when it is appropriate, by sharing information and evidence that is related to complaints. It should be noted that the SCAN unit does not investigate on behalf of the RCMP; they do not do that work. They work in concert with the RCMP, but should the SCAN unit be investigating a matter that ultimately results in criminal charges, all of that investigative work is done by the RCMP.

The relationship with the RCMP has resulted in 22 combined actions with the RCMP or other law enforcement between 2017 and 2019. Our communities and our partners benefit from the SCAN unit's hard work. This amendment would allow the unit to further improve safety for Yukoners.

As I noted, statistics and the known increase in organized crime in the Yukon have allowed us to gain essential insight so that we can deliver this bill to the legislature.

One last note that I should make with respect to this legislation is that I have had some, albeit brief, discussions with the Leader of the Third Party. I know that one of the issues that was brought to the Legislative Assembly floor was the concept of a review in this legislation.

As I said, it came into effect in 2006 and it did not include a review clause, as some pieces of legislation do from time to time. I agree with the members of the Third Party and the Leader of the Third Party that it is high approaching time for a review of this legislation. There are always questions about how it operates, and I think that the statistics show that the operation of SCAN has been very specific. It has been well within the legislation and the opportunities that the legislation provides, and it is also an opportunity for folks to question that or to make suggestions with respect to how SCAN could be improved. With respect to those conversations, I have committed to members of the Third Party and commit here, on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, to begin a review of the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* in 2023, based on the current legislative agenda and some of the work that is set out in the work plans well into the future. We will need to make room for that to happen.

I can also indicate that we will return with this piece of legislation at the spring legislative Sitting — on the spring legislative agenda — to introduce an amendment to the act to include a review every five years after that. As I spoke with the Leader of the Third Party, it is complicated to achieve some of those reviews, especially if there are many, many of them that are happening on a five-year cycle, but nonetheless, I appreciate that this is an active and important piece of legislation to Yukon communities. A review, as I have noted, to begin in 2023 will be welcome to many of the stakeholders and an opportunity for a better understanding of the SCAN and how it operates. Any room for improvement is always welcome, so I look forward to that. I have made that commitment here and I have done so in writing to the Leader of the Third Party, and I know that this will address some of the questions that she has had about how we are going forward with the amendments here in Bill No. 6.

I look forward to the opportunity to answer questions from my colleagues across the way if there are any specific questions in relation to Bill No. 6, which, as I have said, is quite a specific opportunity and request to add three other offences and activities to the specified use that exists in the SCAN act.

Mr. Cathers: The minister is trying to downplay the scope of this and the fact that there was no public consultation on the provisions. But, in fact, these are significant increases to powers that would be provided under the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*.

I would note that, of course, the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* was brought in over 15 years ago. The act has value, but there have also been concerns about the scope of it.

The government, I believe, is still dealing with outstanding court action related to this legislation. I would remind the minister, as I did earlier, that the government has a clear double standard when the former Minister of Community Services, the

Government House Leader, indicated previously — when we were proposing changes to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* — that they couldn't contemplate that while they were facing court action related to that legislation and that it would be irresponsible. But it's quite convenient that, when the Official Opposition wants to amend legislation that the government is being sued in court by Yukoners over, the government takes that as an excuse to rule out the possibility of amendments, but when the government wants to proceed with amendments themselves, it apparently, in their view, becomes irrelevant and a different standard applies, despite the fact that they are being taken to court over the provisions of this legislation.

I do want to note again that the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* was brought in in 2006. There are good reasons for it because of the challenge of using a criminal standard, and the act has been successful in many ways. It is also very important to emphasize and note that there is a reason for using the criminal standard of "beyond a reasonable doubt" and that is to provide protection to people who may be innocent from being wrongly convicted. Lowering the standard, while it does make it easier for law enforcement, does come with some degree of increased risk of unintentionally punishing or taking enforcement action against somebody who is innocent because a lower standard than the criminal standard of "beyond a reasonable doubt" is being applied. That, of course, is a concern.

It is also important to note that, while the minister couches this in terms of going after organized crime, et cetera, there have been times in the past when a previous government considered a civil forfeiture act and then, at that point, based on outcry from Yukoners who felt that it was going too far, did not proceed with trying to pass that act.

We have heard very clearly from Yukoners that there is a point at which Yukoners feel that applying the civil standard to make it easier for law enforcement to go after organized crime carries with it too much risk of innocent people being harmed in the process because of lowering that standard.

I would also note, as I did earlier, that there are elements of this bill that I believe are worth considering. Had they gone through public consultation, there are elements of this proposed amendment that we would very likely be supporting. There are elements of this proposed legislation that we would certainly be happy to consider if there were public review and public consultation on those provisions — and if the general indication from Yukoners was supportive with no major, significant issues identified during that consultation that might necessitate change.

We do have concerns with the application of this part of the bill to prohibited firearms. That is, of course, in large part because Yukoners have that concern. It doesn't start with guns that were illegal at the time of purchase; it relates to firearms that Yukoners lawfully acquired and that the Trudeau Liberal government, on May 1, 2020, reclassified through an order-in-council that targeted over 1,500 firearm types that had previously been legally purchased as either "non-restricted" or "restricted" weapons. They chose to reclassify those as "prohibited" firearms. Contrary to the long-standing practice of

previous federal governments, which, when they have brought in legislation that classifies a firearm as "prohibited", has grandfathered in people who own it, the Trudeau government stepped forward with what they classified as a "buyback" but is really confiscation by a friendlier name.

Because it relates to property that was lawfully acquired by citizens, including Yukoners, this has been something that is very upsetting and offensive to millions of Canadians, including here in Yukon. Because that approach had bypassed Parliament and was done through order-in-council — and bypassed any public consultation as well — it is again a situation where people are facing a situation where they have done nothing wrong and committed no crime, but property that they lawfully acquired is at risk of being confiscated by the government through changes to regulations that they had no opportunity for input on. It is very concerning to many Yukoners.

The provisions of this legislation do create the possibility that the very same firearms that were targeted by the Trudeau government's order-in-council could be confiscated by the Yukon government through this expansion to the legislation. So, we do have concerns with that. Yukoners have concerns with that, and the fact that these current provisions are brought forward without public consultation adds more concern to that specific issue.

I would note, as well, that when it comes to the topic of the federal government's legislation related to firearms, it is not just ourselves or Yukoners or other Canadian citizens who are arguing against that legislation. In fact, the union representing RCMP members, the National Police Federation, issued a position statement, which I have quoted previously right here in this Legislative Assembly. That statement was issued in November 2020. I am not going to read from it, as I did at length previously during second reading on October 18, but I will just highlight a couple of quick excerpts from it which are in that position statement and also, for the reference of Hansard, are on page 434 of Hansard from October 18: "Costly and current legislation, such as the Order in Council prohibiting various firearms and the proposed 'buy-back' program by the federal government targeted at legal firearm owners, does not address these current and emerging themes or urgent threats to public safety.

"It also does not address: criminal activity, illegal firearms proliferation, gang crime, illegal guns crossing the border or the criminal use of firearms.

"In fact, it diverts extremely important personnel, resources, and funding away from addressing the more immediate and growing threat of criminal use of illegal firearms."

Again, what I am pointing to here is the fact that the issue around those specific guns — that, in many cases, were legal, non-restricted rifles at the time of purchase and have been targeted by the federal government and would be caught up as prohibited firearms in these changes brought forward by the government —

Again, I have to remind the government and emphasize that it's not just a question of whether, if someone unlawfully

has or is unlawfully using a prohibited firearm, enforcement action should be taken, but what the legal standard is for taking action and for potentially confiscating that property.

Again, as I noted in introducing my comments on this in Committee of the Whole, while we do agree that the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* has value, it is important to note, and Yukoners have been clear in the past, that there is a point at which applying a lower standard than the criminal standard of “beyond a reasonable doubt” can be problematic. As I mentioned before during one proposed piece of legislation back in 2010, the minister, after hearing from many Yukoners, including me, with concerns on behalf of constituents about the legislation, did choose not to proceed with that because of public opposition to the civil forfeiture act. While the specifics of the legislation are different, it does relate to the same general principle.

At a time, as well, when business owners and other people are upset about the ongoing practice of this government of implementing major measures and not consulting with the public — whether it be ministerial orders under CEMA or other changes — the fact that the government chose not to consult on this piece of legislation is our single biggest problem with the proposed bill.

With that, Deputy Chair, I am sure that I am not going to get any different answers from the minister, but I do feel that it is important to put this on the record, especially in case the government guillotines this bill, to again note our specific concerns and note that, first and foremost, they are concerns we have heard from Yukoners and our concerns about the lack of consultation. We do believe, as the Third Party has also indicated, that the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* should have a public review. We would encourage the government to, in fact, move up the review from when the minister indicated that she was planning it for, because timing-wise, the government is likely to not even still be in office by 2023, when she indicated that would occur.

You shouldn't make significant changes like this before consulting on them. You should consult first and then listen to Yukoners and hear what concerns they identify — or perhaps they support it. The important thing is, in a democracy, public consultation matters.

Unfortunately, this government, especially the current Minister of Community Services, the Member for Whitehorse West, has a record of ramming things through and not doing consultation properly, which of course is why their so-called “better building program” is becoming a colossal failure that has municipal leaders opposing it. Unfortunately, if this government were a little more open to public consultation and consulting with municipal leaders, they could avoid these problems instead of continually embarrassing themselves through their refusal to consult with the public on major policy matters and legislative matters.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think there are a number of points raised by the member opposite, not necessarily questions in there, but I am happy to address them. Let me start by saying that the example given with respect to consultation at the beginning of the member opposite's comments is not at all

comparable to the situation we have here. I've said clearly before that no public consultation was done with respect to the amendments being brought forward in Bill No. 6. I can tell you that they were not done because the statistics, as I've laid them out — and I have lots more — speak for themselves. Adding these three criminal activities to the specified uses under SCAN that can be investigated, if there is a complaint and if the activity is affecting the safety of a community, are required to make Yukoners safe and to make Yukoners' communities safer.

The member opposite spoke at some length about a criminal standard. I think this SCAN situation has nothing to do with “beyond a reasonable doubt”. It does not require a criminal standard because it's not a criminal process. I said that quite clearly when I stood the first time. This is a civil remedy; it is property-related; it is not related to individuals' activities; it is not related to individuals being ultimately charged with a crime, unless there is criminal activity that is ultimately investigated by the RCMP, but that's not to do with the SCAN process.

The SCAN process does permit individuals in the community to launch a complaint. An assessment is done by the SCAN unit to determine if and when that complaint is substantiated and how and if it should be investigated. Some are; some are not — based on the ways in which the complaint comes forward, based on the activity that is complained about, and based on the criteria that are set out in the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* and whether or not that criteria are met in the complaint.

Clearly, I've noted this is a civil remedy — for those students of that kind of thing, which is on a balance of probabilities — but I want to be clear that the comments made by the member opposite about “beyond a reasonable doubt” and a criminal standard being applied here or possibly being applied here in this situation — just is not the case.

I could also note that in the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*, there is oversight by the Supreme Court, and the most intervention-related matters, should they get that far, are done in partnership with — as I've said — sometimes First Nations or landlords, depending on the circumstances and the situation. In the event that the most serious remedy of closing a property under SCAN is sought, it is done with the oversight of the Supreme Court of this territory.

I want to speak for a second — I know we are, I think, running out of time, but I would like to speak about prohibited firearms. The SCAN focus is on firearms that are used in criminal acts, firearms that are used to intimidate, to hurt, or to kill. It does not permit the investigation of the ownership or the registration of firearms.

I can also indicate that — and I really want this to be on the record — I know that there will be other opportunities, I hope, to make this clear, but Yukoners need to know that these changes will not affect the legal ownership of firearms, nor will they affect the legal possession, use, sale, purchase, storage, or transportation of firearms. This amendment will only apply to firearms-related activities that are currently illegal under the *Criminal Code* — to repeat, as I said, when firearms are used

in criminal acts to intimidate, to hurt, or to kill, not to investigate the legal ownership of firearms.

I'm sure the member opposite is aware of this. I hope he is, by reading Bill No. 6, and I am concerned that he is straying from the focus of this for individuals who may be concerned about their firearms here in the territory, and it's simply not the case and not the submission of Bill No. 6 and not what is included in this amendment going forward.

I do have more to comment on with respect to the member opposite's comments so far, but I know that the time has come to 3:15 p.m., so pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 4, I move that you report progress.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale South that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Appearance of witnesses

Deputy Chair: Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 4 adopted earlier today, Committee of the Whole will receive witnesses from the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board.

In order to allow the witnesses to take their places in the Chamber, the Committee will now recess and reconvene at 3:30 p.m.

Recess

Deputy Chair: Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Appearance of witnesses

Deputy Chair: Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 4 adopted on this day, Committee of the Whole will now receive witnesses from the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. I would ask all members to remember to refer their remarks through the Chair when addressing the witnesses, and I would also ask the witnesses to refer their answers through the Chair when they are responding to the members of the Committee.

I would also ask that, when the witnesses are finished an answer, they just indicate that they are finished so that I can pass the floor on to the next member.

The Member for Whitehorse West, I believe, will introduce the witnesses.

Witnesses introduced

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This afternoon, we have Mark Pike, the chair of the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, and the president, Kurt Dieckmann, here to answer questions on behalf of the House.

Deputy Chair: Would the witnesses like to make brief opening remarks? You have five minutes.

Mr. Pike: My name is Mark Pike, and I am chair of the board for the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. I am joined here today by Kurt Dieckmann, our president and CEO. We want to thank you for the opportunity to come before you today and participate in what we expect will

be an informative discussion about the board, our annual report, our business, and the culture of workplace safety in the Yukon.

The *Workers' Compensation Act* requires us to appear in this House on an annual basis. We always enjoy this appearance because it provides us with the opportunity to talk about the work and duties that every member of our organization is proud to perform.

For decades, the past two years will be stamped into our collective memory. The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed the way we work, connect with our loved ones, and move through our day-to-day lives. As chair and on behalf of the board of directors and all of our staff, we recognize the amount of change and uncertainty that every Yukoner has experienced over the past two years.

While we couldn't anticipate a global pandemic of this scale, we have worked diligently to create a stable foundation with a strong, funded position in preparation for issues that we have faced during this pandemic. It's a foundation that allowed us to serve Yukoners when it was most needed.

We recognize that there have been many challenges for both employers and workers in the workplace. From a business owner struggling to stay afloat to a young worker who has suddenly lost their job, navigating the pandemic has challenged the mental health of so many Yukoners. The situation has reminded us that we must take care of our minds and not just our bodies. Our organization remains steadfast in our commitment that all Yukoners participate in a culture of safety and prevention.

In September 2020, the Government of Yukon approved a regulation to prevent violence and harassment in the workplace, alongside amendments to the general safety recommendations that clarify employer responsibilities. The *Violence and Harassment Prevention Regulation* and the hazard assessment amendment to the general safety regulations came into effect on September 4 of this year. These new laws will help employers and workers to develop a workplace culture that promotes physical and psychological health and safety. We extend our thanks to everyone for their work, support, and contributions to that effort.

We have to take action every day to prevent disability, whether it is through safety training, planning, or education. Preventing disability is a shared responsibility, and we all need to put safety at the forefront of every single activity we do.

I'm happy to appear before you today with Mr. Dieckmann. We welcome any questions that you may have about our 2020 annual report and any other aspects of our business. I note that in our annual report on the inside front cover is a summary of our "year at a glance", which is quite informative. With that, I would like to thank you, Deputy Chair.

Ms. McLeod: I want to thank the witnesses for joining us here today. We always have pretty good discussions here, so I'm happy to participate with you.

I would like to begin with some questions that I have asked the minister in Committee, but I would like to get some feedback from the witnesses today. I will start with the level of the compensation fund. I asked the minister about whether or not there was ever consideration of legislating a fixed target for

the rate. We know that, at various points, the compensation fund has strayed beyond the policy targets that are set.

Can the witnesses give us their take on this?

Mr. Pike: In response to that, certainly it's not our role to legislate anything. That is the role of this House, but we certainly look at that, and whenever we are outside our target range as set out in our funding policy, we take specific steps to move back to get within that target range.

As an aside to that question, I am actually proud of our staff. One of the reasons we have been able to be outside of our target range is because of the great job that our CFO and all of his staff have done with respect to managing our funds. That is really what has created, for lack of a better word, the excess in our funding position.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you for that. I am going to move on to changes that are coming to the legislation. In particular, I would like to ask the witnesses about the changes to the list of presumptive cancers for firefighters. Has the board done any analysis on what impact these changes will have on the compensation fund and the potential downstream impacts of doing so?

Mr. Dieckmann: Yes, we actually have done some analysis on that. Essentially, whenever a presumption is put in place for occupational diseases, it does have impacts on the compensation fund. It requires the board to book liabilities based on the list of diseases and the people included in those diseases.

Bill No. 8, as it currently stands, includes an expansion of cancers for structural firefighters. That expansion will result in some rate impacts on the government rate. Essentially, what we would see is that it would provide an ongoing increase in the rate for government of about 2 cents, but also it will result in the liability increasing by about \$2.7 million. That \$2.7 million will have to be recovered, and the board of directors typically amortizes that over a 10-year period, so that would mean another 6 cents amortized over that 10-year period, so a total of an 8-cent increase to the government rate for that 10-year period.

Ms. McLeod: I would like to inquire about the recent addition of PTSD and injuries related to mental health. Can the board discuss how these additions have impacted them and whether or not there has been any impact on the fund and/or the rates?

Mr. Dieckmann: I am assuming that you are referring to the proposals put forward in Bill No. 8.

The change to Bill No. 8 in regard to the PTSD presumption actually won't have any effect on the fund. That is not a liability that has to be booked. Only occupational disease liabilities are booked.

With the expansion of the PTSD presumption, it actually aligns very well with our policies as they currently stand, so it won't mean that we are accepting any more claims than what we already do. All that it really does is align very well with what our current practices are.

Now, if you want to talk about the impact of psychological injury over the past number of years, we are seeing an increase in the number of psychological injury claims, and those claims

are very expensive. The return to work is difficult. Lots of times people will return to work, but there will be some recidivism and they go back on claim.

For the most part, people do eventually get better and back on claim, but the duration of those claims can be considerably longer. That does add to the cost to the system. Currently, the costs of psychological injuries account for almost 20 percent of the total cost of injuries for claims that we accept.

Mr. Pike: I just wanted to add a point there that, with respect to the amount of funds that need to be set aside to look after aged workers, those are not decisions that the board itself has made. There is a very, very sophisticated world of actuarial science where our actuary determines the amount of money that we need to set aside. Those are out of our control.

I guess, in theory, we could do something different, but nobody would want to violate what the actuary says you need to set aside. So, when we talk about whether something needs to be funded up front, or gets funded as it happens, that is the world of actuarial science and that's where the numbers that Mr. Dieckmann is talking about come from.

Ms. McLeod: So, I'm not going to pretend that I understand actuarial science or even ever want to, but I do find it interesting that a condition that affects up to 20 percent of claims has no impact on the rates — if I take your point correctly there.

I'm going to move on from there.

Regardless of the presumption of cause for those types of injuries, the worker in question would still need to seek diagnosis before they can receive compensation — at least that is my understanding. Is the board aware of the level of difficulty in getting a diagnosis these days in the Yukon? Are they able to give us any information on what their understanding is in this respect?

Mr. Dieckmann: So, first of all, just to clarify that, when I say that it doesn't have any impact, it does have considerable impact, but we have also done a really good job on claims management over the year, and so costs have come down for claims in other areas while they have gone up for psychological injury. So, in effect, our claims costs have remained constant, but there is always the chance that, if other claims costs start to go up, we could see significant spikes occur. It really comes down to how we do with case management, the ability to get people back to work, the employer's willingness to participate in the return to work, and the worker's willingness to participate in return to work. Those are all really important factors, and we have seen improvements in injury rates over the years as well, which have also impacted those claims costs. You can't look at any one item in isolation; you have to sort of look at the whole.

The second part of your question — sorry, Deputy Chair, can I get that repeated?

Ms. McLeod: The second part of that question was about the difficulty in getting a diagnosis to seek a claim for a mental health claim or compensation. So, I was wondering what the witnesses' understanding was of that situation and how the board is dealing with that.

Mr. Dieckmann: You are absolutely correct. I mean, it does — diagnosis of psychological injury does take a while. It takes, you know — for a PTSD diagnosis, it takes a month from when they are seen by a clinician to when we would actually get a diagnosis, because there is a period of examination that has to be undertaken. We are fortunate in the territory that we do have some very good clinicians, but we do also, quite often, have to send injured workers out in order to get the diagnosis.

The way that we handle those claims is that, even though we don't have a diagnosis yet and may not have necessarily accepted a claim, we still — when a worker files that claim, we send them for initial examination and treatment. We don't require them to find a psychologist and get a diagnosis and then file a claim; we encourage them to file the claim right away — we take care of the rest. So, then it doesn't matter — if they have a claim, that's great — they have already started. We have a treatment plan already being worked on; we are working through that. If it turns out that it didn't occur in the course of their employment or because of their employment — we have spent some time and money on getting that diagnosis, but it really is better for the person, as well, because they also have an understanding of what the issues are and what treatments they need. They can then, you know, continue through their medical providers.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you for that. I recall from the briefing that the witness had indicated that they may have some avenues that others don't have, so that is good.

Now, in Committee, we asked the minister about this whole situation with the psychiatrists, and he said that a diagnosis from a psychiatrist or a psychologist was indeed required. So, we pointed out that psychology is not regulated in the Yukon, so I would like to get the board's thoughts on how they determine the qualifications of a psychologist, given that there is no regulatory framework for that profession in the Yukon.

Mr. Dieckmann: In order for us to use any service provider, the board requires — we first will have to enter into a contract with them. We don't work with any service providers that we do not have a contractual arrangement with. We will not enter into a contract with a service provider unless they are registered with either a governing body here in the territory or in another province. All of the psychologists whom we deal with are registered in another jurisdiction. That is how we manage that piece of it.

Ms. McLeod: I understand that the professionals are registered in some other jurisdiction, given that we don't have a regulatory body here for them to register with. I am guessing that is where that comes from. I just want to clarify if you are sending people outside of the territory to see these professionals or if these professionals are operating within the Yukon without regulation in the Yukon.

Mr. Dieckmann: Anyone who we deal with is registered either in Yukon or in another jurisdiction. There are a number of psychologists who are here in Yukon who are registered in other jurisdictions, so those are the ones whom we will deal with. As far as the regulations go, that is not for me to weigh into. That would be a question for the minister.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you for that. I would like to turn to the issue of subrogation. I know that the witnesses are aware of the position that has been taken by the Northern Air Transport Association regarding this matter. They, of course, would like to see a change to section 127 of the act to change the way liability works for employers in the transportation industry because they argue that they are unfairly targeted. Can the witnesses comment on this position and provide us with their response? As far as we can tell, the Yukon is a bit of any outlier in our part of the country, so has the board ever considered moving to a system similar to what is in place in other territories or provinces?

Mr. Dieckmann: There again, that is a policy question, so I can't really speak to policy questions. I am more than happy to speak to some of the research we have done and the information that we were able to provide to government to make those policy decisions, but I can't speak to the policy decisions themselves.

Ms. McLeod: I wonder if the witnesses could provide us, by a future return, with the information that they have on that matter.

Mr. Dieckmann: I am more than happy to speak to information that was provided. Like I said, it's the policy decision question that I can't speak to. What was considered for the policy is not my purview, but I am more than happy to talk about the information we were able to provide, if the member would like me to speak to that information.

Ms. McLeod: Yes, please.

Mr. Dieckmann: The way the act is currently set up for the vested actions is actually quite consistent with most jurisdictions. When you look at how the various jurisdictions have approached vested actions, there are a number of jurisdictions that do it the same way we do or similarly. There's an ability to take a subrogated action on behalf of a worker when a motor vehicle is involved in a crash. In instances where another insurer is covering a motor vehicle and there is negligence on the part of the operator of the vehicle, we are able to go after that other insurer to recover the costs.

Government asked us to engage on this issue. When we went out and engaged on the issue and we brought it to stakeholders, the majority of stakeholders actually supported the way the status quo works.

What we did is we explained to them that, if we limit the ability to recover, or if we don't recover from a third-party insurer, it could result in increased costs to employers and decreased benefits to workers, because when we're able to recover through a third-party insurer, that amount of money that we recover is not applied to the rates of the local employers.

When you look at the size of the insurance pool that we have here in the territory, we have a very small pool of insured individuals — like, we have about 4,000 companies that are insured. When you look at something like a large insurer, like Meloche Monnex or something like that, they have thousands and thousands of insured individuals. So, the impact on the rate, when it goes through a third-party insurer, is a lot less than if we apply it to the rates of Yukon employers.

Now, one of the things that I really want to sort of stress with this is that, whenever we pursue a vested action, it is very much because there was negligence on the part of the operator. The way it works here is, if an employer's workers are injured in one of their vehicles or two of their workers have an accident, we don't take action against a worker's own employer. It only applies when there is another employer or somebody who is outside the system.

So, when those actions come forward — and one of the things that has been requested or that was suggested during consultation was that it be limited to the amount of the insurance. We have never had an instance with a properly insured individual where the action exceeded the amount of the insurance they carried. The danger you run in going that route is, if somebody under-insures or doesn't insure and you limit it to the amount of the insurance, then there wouldn't be a recovery, and Yukon employers are picking up that cost.

As far as targeting a particular industry, this doesn't target the transportation industry at all. As a matter of fact, most of the subrogated actions that we have are motor vehicles outside of our system. It is car crashes; it is individuals operating their vehicle running into an employer's vehicle. It doesn't just apply to one industry; it does apply to every industry.

So, when we look at where we get the recoveries, individuals outside the system account for about 42 percent of the recoveries that we get. That could be an employer who has come into the territory, is here for less than 10 days, has an accident, and causes injury to a Yukon worker. Another 13 percent of the subrogated actions that we have are actually in relation to occupational disease — not associated with motor vehicles at all. The aviation industry accounts for about 23 percent, and car accidents actually account for 65 percent.

Mr. Pike: I just want to add one point — and Kurt is going to smile when I talk about this because I am going to talk like an accountant.

From our point of view, it is a zero-sum game. If you were to change that provision, our costs are still the same and so the only other place where we actually get money is from employer assessments, so it's a matter of trying to figure out what the right thing to do is. From the point of view of the board of directors, that again is the purview of this House, but we are in a situation where somebody is paying for the tragic injury that has occurred to an individual.

Mr. Dieckmann: I didn't answer the second part of that question, which was about the approach that Yukon takes as compared to other jurisdictions. So, when you look at the approach that Yukon takes — as I have said, it is vested action and it applies to vehicles. So, the approach that is used in the Yukon is very similar to three other jurisdictions; they take the same approach that Yukon does.

The limiting of the liability to the insurance amount — the Northwest Territories and Nunavut are the only jurisdictions that do that, but they do have vested actions for vehicles. In Yukon, the NWT, and a couple of the other jurisdictions, it does apply to aircraft and watercraft in those as well. There are a couple of jurisdictions that restrict the definition of “motor

vehicle” to “vehicles that travel on the highway only”, essentially.

The larger jurisdictions — BC, Alberta, Ontario, and Québec — do not do vested actions or subrogated claims, but what they do is that they allow workers to opt out of the system and pursue an action by themselves. So, it really does have the same effect as allowing for a subrogated action. In those instances, there is no limitation on the amount of the action to the insurance amount either. So, we are actually aligned with all of the smaller jurisdictions that have smaller funds, and those smaller funds would take a much larger hit in the case of not collecting from those vested actions from larger insurance providers.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you for that.

I am going to move on here. I have a few questions around the refusal of work provisions. There are a number of steps laid out, including the reporting obligation, the investigation obligation of the employer, the appeal process, and the consequences.

Can he take us through how the board understands that this process should work under the current legislation in sections 15 through 17?

Mr. Dieckmann: We are talking about the right to refuse unsafe work. So, under the current legislation, if a worker exercises their right to refuse unsafe work, there is an obligation immediately for the employer to contact Occupational Health and Safety and for an Occupational Health and Safety officer to come and do an investigation.

The way that the government has laid out the legislation under Bill No. 8, what there would be is an interim process that is really important to have. So, if a worker is assigned to do a task and they feel that they are unable to do it or that it is unsafe to do it, they should immediately be letting their supervisor know. The supervisor should, at that point, immediately be trying to take steps to remedy the problem.

In a lot of instances where we have gone and investigated work refusals, the workers themselves have told us, “Well, I didn't know what to do and I talked to the supervisor, but once I talked to the supervisor and they showed me or they got somebody else to come and help, it was good and I was able to do the work.” The current act is not consistent with the way that other acts have laid this out — where there is an opportunity for the employer or supervisor to remedy and help the worker to understand how to do the work, remedy it or get somebody more experienced to do the work, or whatever needs to be done, before they have to engage a safety officer.

If they have reported to the supervisor, the supervisor has come up with methods to remedy, and the worker still feels that it is unsafe to work, then at that point the employer is obligated to call in a safety officer to do an investigation.

Ms. McLeod: Let's say that there is a finding by a safety officer that the work is safe; what are the outcomes then, given that the employee has obviously refused to do the work?

Mr. Dieckmann: At that point, the employer can move forward with any actions that would be available to them under a collective agreement if they have one. They could provide additional training. If it was outside the employment contract,

they could take disciplinary action. It would really depend on the situation. It's not up to the board to determine what happens at that point. Our job would be to make a determination if there was an unsafe condition and the right to refuse work was justified.

On that note, in most instances where there has been a disagreement — and even in instances where we haven't found that the right to refuse work was not properly exercised — we typically do find that there was some sort of minor deficiency, like lack of training or lack of mentoring and those kinds of things. We will typically have a discussion with that employer and try to coach them into how to make sure that they don't have work refusals in the future.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you for that. I wonder if the witnesses could provide a little bit of clarity on what the threshold would be under those sections of the act for the employer to implement some sort of disciplinary measure if the final decision finds that the worker abused their rights under this section.

Mr. Dieckmann: That is not within our purview. The act does not provide us with any opportunity to guide employers on how to deal with what at that point would be part of the employee-employer contract.

Ms. McLeod: Now, let's say that this is outside of a union arrangement. Some jobs, obviously, are inherently more dangerous than others.

Is the witness able to comment on what would be considered an abuse of the right to refuse work?

Mr. Dieckmann: I don't like to use the words "abuse the right to refuse unsafe work". We typically don't find that people abuse that, as a right. In most instances, it is a misunderstanding. In some instances, it does arise because of other internal conflicts in the workplace, and we actually do have some tools now in the form of the regulations for the prevention of violence, bullying, and those kinds of things. These disagreements aren't necessarily because of violence and bullying — don't get me wrong there — but because there is perceived injustice within the workplace.

So, by putting appropriate processes and programs in place, employers can usually ward off any sort of situations that might arise with a refusal to work, based on a perceived injustice in some other area.

That being said, when we do an investigation on work refusals, we will look at the physical plant — for example, are there guards missing, or is equipment properly maintained? Is there a hazard or a risk that could arise from the equipment being used? We will look at processes and say, "Are there issues with processes? Is there a lack of procedures? Are policies not clear and up to date?" We will go through those types of lists. We will look to see if the employer has properly assessed the hazards associated with the work that is being done. Did they properly assess the risk to the employees and provide good, solid, safe work practices and safe job procedures in order to do that work correctly? Was the worker properly trained and instructed and supervised in the course of doing that work?

If we find that all those things are in place — and I will tell you that we rarely find that all those things are in place — then the conclusion would be that the worker's work refusal or — I won't say the worker did not have the right to refuse to work; they always do — but the refusal is not justified.

As I said, it is rare that we find all those things are in place. We also find very, very rarely that the employer intentionally put the worker in a position where they are in jeopardy. A lot of times, it is a communication issue that has arisen.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you to the witness for that.

Have the processes on how to deal with these right-to-refuse-work sections changed substantially from the old legislation to the new amalgamated legislation?

Mr. Dieckmann: As it is written in the legislation, it appears like it has changed dramatically, but with how it has been practically applied and the guidance we have provided to employers over the years, it actually reflects what we have been telling employers and workers since I have been working at the board as to how to apply the work refusal provisions.

So, it has shifted from the way we have applied and enforced the act; it is now clearer and laid out in the act so people can understand it without calling us in to explain it to them.

Ms. McLeod: I have been to your new website, and under the "Workers" tab in the section "Right to refuse unsafe work", the processes that are there now appear to be developed under the new legislation, and the witness can confirm that when he next gets up, if he doesn't mind, but it seems that the investigation by the supervisor in the presence of the employee is step 2 in the process, as opposed to step 1 in the old legislation.

Can the witness just comment on that, please?

Mr. Dieckmann: The steps that we have posted currently on the website are aligned with our current act, and those have been on there for a while. Bill No. 8 hasn't passed, so we would not make changes based on what is contained in the bill. Those processes — as I have said, we laid that out a number of years ago. Those have been on our website for a while so that it does lay out the process. Essentially, the process that should always be gone through — and if Bill No. 8 does pass, it won't change dramatically from what we are telling employers now: If something happens in your workplace, a worker states that they refuse to do the work, contact the supervisor, have a discussion, and see if the supervisor can resolve the issue. If the issue can't be resolved, contact a safety officer, and we will come in and investigate. That's pretty much the way it works, and it will continue — if Bill No. 8 passes, it will be very similar.

Ms. McLeod: Looking at the website, it would appear that it's the responsibility of the employee who is reporting unsafe work, and the employer to report concerns to the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, but the act seems to indicate that it's the responsibility of the employer only. If you could just clarify that for us, I would appreciate that.

Mr. Dieckmann: Yes, the responsibility to report, if the issue cannot be resolved, rests with the employer — absolutely.

But it does not preclude the employee from following up and reporting it to us, if it is not reported by the employer. That would form part of our investigation. If we get the report from the worker and we do find that there was some justification for the refusal, we would hold the employer accountable for having not reported that to us. So, it is absolutely their responsibility, but workers are not precluded from doing it.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you for that. Now, my next question is related to section 18 under the current act, which involves prohibited reprisal of complaints. How would an employee initiate an investigation by WCB into that process? What would the investigation process look like?

Mr. Dieckmann: If any individual has a complaint, we would encourage them to report an unsafe act, unsafe condition, a reprisal — report it to our office. Once the reprisal is reported, then we will dispatch a safety officer to the workplace to do an investigation.

Investigations, as I'm sure everyone understands, can go down a number of different routes, but essentially, a safety officer will attend the site. They will start to look into it. They will ask for records from the employer as to actions taken against a worker. They will interview the worker. They will interview other workers in the workplace. Based on those interviews and the documentation, they would make a determination as to whether or not there was a reprisal against the worker.

If there was a reprisal against the worker, then the only avenue of recourse at this point, under the current legislation, would be to prosecute the employer in court, and the courts would then be able to — if the prosecution was successful, the courts would make a determination as to what reparations would be made.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you for that.

So, if WCB was to take the employer to task for reprisals, that would be in the form of a court action, rather than fines or something under the *Summary Convictions Act*?

Mr. Dieckmann: That is correct.

Ms. McLeod: So, given that these penalties are applied between the board and the employer, if a safety officer or director found a violation under section 18, what is the recourse for the employee? In the penalties that are identified in the legislation, it doesn't look like they address the status of the employee, so can he indicate what redress would be there for the employee, if there was a violation proven under section 18?

Mr. Dieckmann: If the director initiated a prosecution under section 18 and the prosecution was successful in a court of law, it would fall upon the judge, at that point, to make a determination as to what remedies would be put in place. Once it is in the hands of the courts and the courts have made a finding, it is out of our hands. We no longer have any say as to what happens.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you, Deputy Chair, and thank you for that information.

So, a worker who is fined an administrative penalty for a violation under the act also has recourse to an appeal panel, as I understand it, but I would like the witness to confirm that. I was wondering why no information found under the "Workers"

tab on your website advises workers that they can appeal the imposition of an administrative penalty — to appeal to the panel — and there doesn't seem to be any guidance on how to do that, so if you could just comment on that, please.

Mr. Dieckmann: Yes, anyone who is aggrieved by a decision of a safety officer under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* has an ability to appeal that decision. The "Workers" tab — you are right; it isn't under there. It's actually under the "Appeals" tab on our website — as to where appeals are. That deficiency was actually pointed out to me a while ago. I have asked our comms people to correct that.

Ms. McLeod: Excellent, thank you. I just had one further question. I am going through the "what we heard" document. On page 23 where we talk about first-aid regulations, there is a comment here that the requirements for first-aid kits should be more flexible. I wonder if you can talk about that a little bit. Is it going to be more flexible depending on the type of workplace? Just what is that, please?

Mr. Dieckmann: Actually, that is an issue that has sprung up in all jurisdictions. When you look at the requirements for first-aid kits, every jurisdiction has very specific contents that need to go into first-aid kits. The regulation is too prescriptive in that area, in my view. There is a working group through the Canadian Association of Administrators of Labour Legislation — the occupational safety and health group — that has been directed by the Premiers, essentially — by COF — to find ways to harmonize regulations as much as possible. That is one of the areas where there has actually been some harmonization. We now accept first-aid kits from other jurisdictions.

What we have done is a level 1 in Yukon — we will accept a level 1 from BC, Alberta, and other jurisdictions. The other jurisdictions all do the same. So, through the agreement, we have gotten away from the specific contents and gone more to the level of the kit, which has to be able to meet certain needs. It's dependent on the level of the first-aid attendant that you have and what their skill sets are. They have to have the equipment in the first-aid kits to provide care for the types of injuries that may occur, and we have gotten away from the prescriptive that you have to have 15 Band-Aids and three tubes of disinfectant and that sort of thing.

Ms. McLeod: I can appreciate that. I hope that everybody applies the same kind of yardstick when they are determining what they think should go in them.

That is the end of my questions. After the briefing, we were promised a certain number of documents, and I want to say that I was very happy with the speed with which those were delivered to our inboxes, so I want to thank you and your organization for that, for sure.

I want to thank you for your time today, and I am going to turn it over now to the Third Party.

Ms. White: I thank the witnesses for being here, and I do appreciate you attending today.

It probably won't surprise anyone to know that I have more questions about the legislation that has been tabled than necessarily about the annual report, so I want to start with the "what we heard" document.

I am a sure that it is not a surprise to anyone at this point in time that I have a deep interest in including wildland firefighters in the presumptive cancer coverage. I just wanted to reference page 31 in the “what we heard” document where it does actually highlight that this was brought up.

Can the witnesses share with me more of, for example, the organizations or the number of folks who would have participated in the review and participated in this “what we heard” document?

Mr. Dieckmann: I do have that information.

I will just start with how we did our consultation. When we did the public engagement, we did a number of things. We contacted multiple stakeholders — employer groups, worker groups, health care providers. We went through associations mainly, but we also did reach out to individual employers and some individual workers who had expressed that they would like to participate.

We did an outreach at first, and then we advised everyone of where our engagements would occur, and we held public open houses in Whitehorse, Haines Junction, Watson Lake, Mayo, and Dawson City. We asked for written submissions. Any organizations or individuals could arrange for one-on-one meetings with us to go over the materials.

I don’t know if you have looked on our website and found them, but we developed issues papers for each of the issues that the government had asked us to consult on. We developed all of these issues papers, and we sent them to all the stakeholders that we had contacted.

Just to give you an idea of the organizations that we talked to, we talked to the Association of Social Workers of Northern Canada, Association of Yukon Communities, Association of Yukon Fire Chiefs, Association of Occupational Therapists, BYTE Empowering Youth Society, Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Canadian Mental Health Association, Canadian Society of Safety Engineers, Carcross/Tagish First Nation, Challenge Disability Resource Group, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Chartered Professional Accountants Yukon, the Chiropractic Council of the Yukon, City of Whitehorse, Council of Yukon First Nations, Dawson City Chamber of Commerce, Engineers Yukon, First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Kaska Dena Council, Klondike Placer Miners’ Association, Kluane First Nation, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Liard First Nation, Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, Northern Air Transport Association, Northern Safety Network Yukon, Physiotherapy Association of Yukon, Public Service Alliance of Canada, Ross River Dena Council, Selkirk First Nation, Silver Trail Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Association, St. Elias Chamber of Commerce, Ta’an Kwäch’än Council, Teamsters Local 31, Teslin Tlingit Council, Tourism Industry Association of Yukon, Town of the City of Dawson, Town of Haines Junction, Village of Mayo, Town of Watson Lake, Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in First Nation, Volunteer Ambulance Services Society, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, Watson Lake Chamber of Commerce, White River First Nation, Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon, Yukon Women in Trades and Technology,

Women’s Directorate, Workers’ Advocate Office, Yukon Chamber of Commerce, Yukon Chamber of Mines, Yukon College, Yukon Contractors Association, Yukon Employees’ Union, Yukon Federation of Labour, Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce, Yukon government Department of Economic Development, Yukon government Public Service Commission, Yukon Hospital Corporation, Yukon Human Rights Commission, Yukon Medical Association, Yukon Outfitters Association, Yukon Registered Nurses Association, Yukon Teachers’ Association, Yukon Carpenters Union Local 2499.

Ms. White: That’s an extensive list, and I appreciate that it went across many different industries.

When a call for submissions was sent out — and part of the reason why I’m trying to get — so, when I look at the “what we heard document” on page 31, where it’s “Firefighter cancer presumption”, it does say, in the first point: “Expand the cancer presumption to include all Yukon firefighters, including wildland firefighters.” One group I noticed off your list was, for example, First Nations Wildfire, who are wildland firefighters, so they would have things to say.

But I do know that the Yukon Employees’ Union did make a submission on January 15, 2020. I want to know how, for example, when people made submissions, that all got included. So, of course, the Yukon Employees’ Union represents the vast majority of Yukon government employees, including Wildland Fire. How would their submission, and others, be viewed in the act review?

Mr. Dieckmann: We invited written submissions from everybody. That list that we have there, we had provided them with multiple channels in which they could provide us with information. The Yukon Employees’ Union actually provided a written submission and did attend a number of our open houses, and so they were very active in it, but the way that we provided the information back to government was we put in that “what we heard” report everything that came through submissions, as well as what we heard when we were doing the general engagement through our open houses, through our community tours, and through all that. It was all put together.

The areas where there was general consensus, based on what we had provided as topics for engagement — we actually were pretty clear in there that, whether or not people were generally in favour, or whether or not people were not in favour, the ones where we just got submissions saying you should also do this, they were just noted in there as that these came in as part of the — this is what we heard as part of the consultation or part of the engagement. It doesn’t necessarily mean that we had engaged all stakeholders on that particular issue.

Ms. White: I do thank the witness for that.

I do just want to go back to the submission by the Yukon Employees’ Union, just because they made nine recommendations out of their submission. Out of the nine recommendations, two of them include wildland firefighters, and both of those asked that their wildland firefighters be included in the presumptions that other firefighters are on. The reason why I want to highlight that is that, out of the nine recommendations that the Yukon Employees’ Union made,

those were two of them. So, two out of nine is a substantial amount, and it was brought up in January 2020.

When the consultation was going on, did anyone from the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, the organization, reach out to Wildland Fire Management directly for feedback?

Mr. Dieckmann: We did not reach out to Wildland Fire directly, no.

Ms. White: I guess the reason why I am asking that is that my understanding is actually different. I actually thought that WCB had reached out directly and that a response was actually supplied in February 2020 from Wildland Fire Management, but I will send that information on.

So, when firefighters were initially covered under presumptive cancer legislation — I mean, that was a really big deal; it is a huge deal. What was the cost when that first happened? So, when structural firefighters were — when the presumptive cancer legislation was originally brought forward, what was the cost to the system?

Mr. Dieckmann: When the original presumption was put in place, the cost to the fund — so, the increase in the benefits liability was \$5 million.

Ms. White: So, the initial cost was \$5 million. Do the witnesses have any idea of the number of structural firefighters in the territory — so, those who work for municipalities, volunteers, and others? Is there a number of how many firefighters there are in the territory?

Mr. Dieckmann: If you can just give me a second, I will see if I have that information. We do have it; I don't know if I have it with me.

Mr. Pike: It appears that it was from several years ago, and we don't have that number at our fingertips, but we will get that information and provide it back to the minister.

Ms. White: I will just signal to anyone in my office who is listening right now. I know, during the Community Services debate, we did actually get a list of all of those firefighters or how many existed. The surprise for me is that there are not nearly as many as I would have expected. The reason why I think that is relevant is that municipal firefighters — for example, for the City of Whitehorse — work full time. Other volunteer firefighters might be part time, and they might only go to a couple fires. That brings me back to wildland firefighters. One of the things I tabled, I believe, last week — maybe it was this week — was a letter in support from the BC union encouraging Yukon to follow British Columbia's example. In the document from 2018 that encouraged the BC government to do that — and I am just quoting from the document: "Each year, there are only about 1,000 frontline BCWS wildland firefighters employed, and we estimate that in a given year, less than 100 of these workers have spent more than ten years on the job. In comparison, annually there are almost 12,000 municipal and volunteer structural firefighters working in B.C., more than ten times the number of BCWS firefighters.

"Because most forest firefighters have short careers in the occupation (1-5 year), extending coverage under Section 6.1 to forest firefighters would capture a very small cohort of the

longest-serving workers" — those who may be at the greatest risk of developing cancer because of occupational exposures. In short, this means making the change would represent a negligible cost to government.

The reason why I bring this forward is based on the numbers I was trying to access about wildland fire in the territory. I think, seasonally, in 2019, there were fewer than 80 wildland firefighters in the territory — less than 8, and seasonal. Based on BC's example, they are short careers, one to five years. For those who go longer, it dropped; it was just 10 percent of that number.

That brings me back to the next point, because in an e-mail that the minister sent out to an airline owner — and I am quoting from that e-mail: "Expanding the presumption to Wildland firefighters has a profound impact on the workers' compensation rates. Doing so will increase the costs to Resource and Transportation Low — the aviation industry, farmers, trappers, prospectors, surveying, adventure tourism, metal mining among them — as much as 45 cents according to actuarial analysis."

I wanted to know if the witnesses could walk us through the analysis that is being referenced — based on what numbers? How much would that fund need to grow in that 10 years to cover wildland firefighters?

Mr. Dieckmann: I would just like to add — I just found it in my notes — that you are correct. We did reach out directly to Wildland Fire Management at Government of Yukon. I apologize for my answer on that.

It's very, very difficult to compare Yukon to BC. We have about a \$230-million fund. Theirs is almost \$2 billion — more than that. Yes, they have a multi-billion-dollar fund. Taking the number of firefighters that they have and spreading that over a much larger insurance base would be considered a negligible effect because their rate would be significantly lower. It is the same issue as what I tried to elaborate on when it comes to the vested actions.

When we asked our actuary to look at the numbers and the years of service, there are a number of pieces that the actuary pulled into it. When we reached out to Wildland Fire Management and asked them how many firefighters there are in Yukon Territory, they told us that there were about 130 — 80 or so working for First Nations Wildfire and about 50 working for the Yukon government. I don't have the exact numbers, but that's what I recall.

When we look at the impact, as I said earlier, and if we just include the current structural firefighters in the Bill No. 8 cancers, that would increase the benefits liability by about \$2.7 million. If the Yukon government were to include the wildland firefighters in the presumption — so, the reason that it is \$2.7 million for the Bill No. 8 current firefighters only is because, for some of those cancers, that liability is already booked. So, the first set of cancers — that liability is already booked. They would have to be booking the rest of them. For wildland fire, there is no liability booked for any of those cancers right now. It would be including the entire list.

The increase in the benefits liability would go from \$2.7 million to between \$6 million and \$9 million. There are

still some variables in there. The actuary would have to dig into it a lot deeper. We had started crunching these numbers a couple of weeks ago, so it will be refined, but the actuary is very confident on the low end and said that the high end is a distinct possibility. It could be from \$6 million to \$9 million.

The way that would impact — from an actual dollar value — and I want to clarify one thing as well. If this is booked — as Mark has said, it's a zero-sum game. The board will have to make a determination in how and where they are going to collect. We had asked the actuary to run the numbers based on the "resource and transportation low", because that is where the First Nations Wildfire is currently situated in our rate structure, but the board of directors would have to take a look at it and determine how they were going to spread that liability out. One of the main jobs of the board of directors is to ensure that assessments are fair, defensible, and appropriately classified. There are a number of ways that the liability could be spread out in the fund, but what we asked for is to have this, in a short amount of time, for illustrative purposes only.

So, with the addition of wildland fire, what we would see is: For the government rate — that would be including Bill No. 8 and the wildland fire — their rate for an ongoing rate would increase by about 3.5 cents, and the amortized rate for the 10 years to make up the difference in the liability would be about 11.5 cents, for a total of a 15-cent increase in that rate over a 10-year period.

For "resource and transportation low" — and, as I said, this is for illustrative purposes only because the board would still have to make decisions on how it would be applied. But, for illustrative purposes, for the impact on resource and transportation low, where wildland fire currently sits, adding the Bill No. 8 cancers for wildland fire would result in an ongoing rate increase of 10.5 percent. There would be an amortized cost of between 20 cents and 35.5 cents, depending on some of the actuarial assumptions that would be put into it, for a total of between a 30.5-cent and 46-cent increase to the rate for that rate group. In real dollar terms, what that means — and this is another way of looking at it — is that adding the Bill No. 8 cancers would mean that industry would absorb an ongoing cost of \$112,000 — that would be ongoing — and industry would absorb an amortized cost of between \$214,000 and \$380,000, for a total of between \$326,000 and \$492,000 over the 10-year period. So, that would be an annual increase in cost to industry.

As far as government goes, their ongoing dollar cost would be \$211,000 a year added to their rate. The amortized rate would be between \$550,000 and \$700,000 per annum, for a total of between \$750,000 and \$900,000 additional cost added every year for the 10-year period.

Ms. White: I do appreciate that from the witness.

So, now that it has just been quoted out and we know that it has been sent around by the minister, could the WCB share a copy of that analysis with members of the opposition?

Mr. Dieckmann: Yes, I have those numbers and I can send them to you.

Ms. White: Just to follow up on that, at this point in time, we know that YEU has come out in support, we know that

Wildland Fire has come out in support, and we know that the firefighter's association itself has come out to support.

So, when we say that the liability could be spread out differently — so we've just used two examples, you have used government, and you have used resource and transportation low — and you said that it was up to the board to decide how that could be spread out. What other options exist?

Mr. Pike: I think that there are no options that are not on the table. It is the purview of the board of directors to decide how the collective liability of the workers' compensation system gets paid for.

Traditionally, the board has said that, within reasonable groups — and that's how we end up with our nine groups. For the industries that have similar claims histories, we're putting them together. So, we call that "resource and transportation low", but — I'm just looking at our list here — that includes things like adventure tourism and other groups. So, we have attempted to group similar industries in terms of cost together, but it is entirely the purview of the board to decide how we do that. Traditionally, again, it is the amount of injuries, and costs for a particular industry have been allocated to that particular industry or the group that industry is in.

Ms. White: I thank the witness for that. So, right now, where do firefighters lie in those groupings?

Mr. Dieckmann: So, currently the structural firefighters sit under the government rate group. So, they are entirely in the government rate group, and the 54 wildland firefighters who currently work for YG would also — that would still go into the government rate group. The board would not move them out of government — in my past experience. I don't mean to speak for the board. But the First Nations Wildfire sits in resource transportation low. That is why we looked at it in that industry being impacted the most.

One of the things that I would like to sort of elaborate on here is that — when we did our engagement, employers weren't engaged at all on this discussion. They weren't included in any of the discussions around it.

These came in to us as written submissions and so were passed on, but the industry hadn't been included, so they aren't, at this point, aware that there could be impacts to the rate, as far as we know.

Ms. White: Just for clarification's sake, we're saying that wildland firefighters who don't work for Yukon government are only viewed as working for First Nations Wildfire and therefore they are underneath the resource and transportation low category. The reason I ask is that I would think that it's about the jobs that are done, as opposed to the employer directly. I am just looking for clarification on how that is decided.

Mr. Pike: I don't know if this answers the question, but the First Nations themselves are under the government rate group, so all the things that they do directly as a First Nation are in there. If they choose to have a development corporation, or some other incorporated entity, to accomplish other objectives, those entities get slotted into where their historical injury costs suggest they should be. Without going back to look at it, I am going to say that this is where the Yukon wildland

firefighters — I don't know the name of the corps — but that's where they ended up being, again, because of their claims history and their costs.

As soon as you get outside of the actual operations of the government itself and into some corporation, then it gets slotted into different groups, and you're out of the government group.

Ms. White: Do municipalities exist underneath the government title as well?

Mr. Pike: Yes, they do. I am just reading from my notes. There are three: the government rate, which is for municipal governments, First Nations, and the Yukon government.

Ms. White: I thank the witness for that. I guess that the direction I am going in right now, when I ask about what these rates would be covered for, is it's actually each of those governments that would stand to benefit from the work done by wildland firefighters. They are protecting communities, protecting infrastructure, and protecting our common resources. I guess that would be a conversation that the board could have.

It has been an interesting conversation, and I appreciate it. I say this because we haven't had a chance to have this conversation in the Legislative Assembly yet. This isn't your typical year when you come in, because normally we don't have legislation on the floor. Just in case we don't get the opportunity to debate that legislation again, I just have a congratulations for, for example, seeing PTSD coverage for all employees. I am sure that the witnesses know that, for the previous Member for Whitehorse Centre, that was something that we really championed for. So, there are really exciting things to see under the legislation, and I do look forward to having more conversations about that, and I am going to pass the floor over.

Mr. Pike: I just wanted to add one last comment to that. I think that I am safe in saying, on behalf of the board, that we are champions of wanting updated and better legislation, and we are all about preventing disability. We care about the Yukon, we care about the workers, and we care about the employers. We want the system to work for us all.

Mr. Dixon: Thanks to the witnesses for the opportunity to ask a few questions. I would like to just build on some of the questions that have been asked previously, and so, if there is some repetition, I do apologize, but based on some of the answers that I heard, I would just like to follow up. Before I do that, the first thing I wanted to ask about is: Has the board done any preparation or given any consideration to the implications of the vaccine mandate, and has there been any preparation done to date for that?

Mr. Dieckmann: As an employer, we have done a lot of preparation for the vaccine mandate. We have had many discussions with our staff about the vaccine mandate, what that means, and steps that will be required for them to follow and to be compliant. We have developed some contingency plans if there are staff who choose not to get vaccinated and go on leave without pay, so yes, we have done a lot of planning, based on our operational needs.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you, I appreciate that. It is a question that we have asked a number of witnesses about both in their

role as employers — but in the case of WCB, obviously there is a unique relationship with the employers in the territory who often look to the WCB for guidance on various matters in relation to their interaction with employees. I know that, as the mandate proceeds, I am sure that employers will have questions about their obligations and their requirements. Likewise, I am sure that employees will as well.

I appreciate that the board has answered as an employer themselves, which I appreciate, but I just wonder if they can expand on the discussions, or guidance, that they have provided so far to employers.

Mr. Dieckmann: We don't weigh into it from the position of vaccine mandates. The approach that we have been taking, whenever we are working with employers, is more from a hazard and risk perspective. Based on the hazards that they face as an employer, the hazard that COVID presents to them as an employer, we are encouraging them to do those hazard assessments, look at the risks to their staff, and come up with processes, safe work practices, safe job procedures, administrative procedures in order to reduce the risk of exposure to their workers and to provide for that safe workplace. That is the type of advice we are giving.

We also have a lot of material available through our website. We have worked closely with the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. We have followed the advice of the chief medical officer of health and other agencies to ensure that any information related to COVID is readily available to employers and to workers on our website. We are always willing to go and help employers by looking at their workplaces, helping them with hazard assessments, and making suggestions on things that they can put in place to provide protection for their workers.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that answer. I will move on.

The witness began to touch on an issue I would like to expand on a little bit. When my colleague asked about the alignment of workplace first-aid kits and training, as the witness alluded to, that came about as a result of the commitments made to the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* and the subsequent Reconciliation and Cooperation Table Agreements. In particular, the 2020 agreement of the RCT committed to a number of safety alignments among jurisdictions. The witness did note that work has already begun for first-aid kits. I just wanted to double-check. Was that a regulatory change that was made as a result of the commitment that was made under the CFTA? And are there further actions to follow through on those commitments coming as well?

I note that, in the 2020 RCT report, the first-aid kit commitment was meant to be completed by December of this year. By December of next year, the various boards across the country were going to look at aligning their occupational exposure limits.

So, I'm wondering if that work is underway. It's sort of a two-part question. On the first-aid kits, was that work a regulatory change or a policy change? Is there work underway on occupational exposure limits as well?

Mr. Dieckmann: I would say that regulatory change depends on the jurisdiction that you are in. We are fortunate in

Yukon in all of the standards that have been addressed to date. Our regulation is actually established in such a way that it says that we must follow this particular standard or another standard acceptable to the director, so we have been able to handle it through administrative direction. The director just simply has to make note and advise industry that we do accept those standards. For us, it has been fairly easy. For some jurisdictions, they do have to make regulatory change. The work is being done. The work plan is being followed quite well.

The occupational exposure limits are set to be, hopefully, done next year, but that is a really large body of work. It is underway. Whether or not it will get done in the timeline that is laid out, I'm not sure. I certainly hope that it does because, in Yukon, our occupational exposure limits are actually still from the 1980s. They are very, very out of date and do need to be worked on, but we have not done any work on it or approached government to bring it to their attention yet because we did know that this work was being done and had already been agreed to through the RCT, and it is being done. We are hopeful that it does happen in the time frame that is laid out.

Mr. Dixon: The witness brings up a very good point that, of course, with regard to our exposure limits, they are at a certain level. In general, I wonder — the reason I'm asking is because oftentimes, in a situation, the board finds itself compelled to action as a result of an agreement made at a national level and a work plan developed by trade policy folks, to be simple about it. Then it often falls to the board to implement those actions and make those changes. Sometimes the commitments that are made at the trade policy level are made without recognizing the amount of work that goes into alignment.

The reason I ask about this particular one is that I know that the exposure limits regulation or policy is one that I think will require a fair amount of consultation with industry, so what I would like to hear from the board is — I mean, I don't think that the private sector needs much consultation around aligning first-aid kits. That is fairly simple, but something like exposure limits may have implications for various workplaces in the territory. I just wanted to ask if there is a general commitment to undertake either targeted or general consultation before those changes are made or considered.

Mr. Dieckmann: Yes, we are still awaiting the report to come from Cal/OSHA — California Occupational Safety and Health. They are working in conjunction with the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, so that report will come out with recommendations. At that point, we will seek permission to consult on that from government. That is definitely part of the process. It is a very major change, so that is definitely something that we would want to be consulting on.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the answer.

The board is currently operating under a strategic plan, which runs from 2018 to 2022, so I assume that there is some work underway to begin the planning for the next iteration of the strategic plan. First of all, has work begun to launch a new strategic plan beyond next year? If so, what work has been done?

Obviously, the 2018 to 2022 strategic plan focused on a number of relevant issues that are currently before employers and employees — cannabis legalization, mental health — and so I'm wondering if the witnesses can give us a glimpse into what they are thinking will be priorities for the coming four-year strategic plan — if it is going to be a four-year strategic plan. Can they give us some discussion about what the issues are that they see needing to be highlighted in the next strategic plan?

Mr. Pike: I would just comment on that. In a normal situation, we would already be starting that process in 2021. We are hoping to finish it by the fall of 2022 and being able to approve it. Because of the legislation that is now before this House, the board chose to put that off until we have either new legislation, the same legislation, or whatever it turns out to be.

So, at this point, we have not actually gone out to start that process. When we do — you may have followed that — we do extensive consultations with groups all over the place. We call them out and ask them what they see going on, what is happening in their world, what we could be doing better, and all kinds of things. I am speaking on behalf of myself personally, but I would anticipate that we would be doing that again. But again, we chose to put that off. Then our strategic planning could be — for lack of a highly technical term — out to lunch if legislation was introduced that is different from what we had in the plan.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the answer.

I apologize if I did miss the witnesses providing this information earlier. If I have missed it, I apologize. But, with regard to the compensation fund, we have had a number of discussions in the Legislature over the years about the level that the compensation fund is at in terms of the policy parameters that the board is given to operate in.

Can the witnesses give us a sense of where the fund is at today, what level it is funded to, what the parameters are currently, and whether or not the fund is within those parameters?

Mr. Pike: I could provide some very broad comments. Obviously, in our report, you will see that it was at 132 percent at the end of 2020. In order to have a number that you could rely on, we would need actuarial valuation at every single date that you wanted to do that. In some of the discussion, you have already heard how complicated that is, not to mention how expensive it is. As a board, we have chosen to do that once a year. I believe that, under the act, we could do it every three years, but we do it every year.

So, really, the definitive number would be on December 31 of each year when they are finished that work and we have a valuation. The markets are a huge part of that, and the markets have been pretty solid in 2021, although in the last month or month and a half, they have taken somewhat of a fallback. I don't want to say that we are up from there, but the board is constantly looking at that, and we look at that every fall to see where we think we are — you know, with our crystal ball — and whether there is any specific action that we need to take. For the last four or five years, I think that we are only missing 2019 when we had a big market crash.

The board has actually approved a rebate to employers. Again, that is to get us back into the range that the board has determined, in consultation with our stakeholders, is appropriate. That is somewhere between 121 and 129, so I am guessing here that the situation is somewhat improved from the end of 2020, but I would need really concrete information from an actuary to determine that.

Of course, the other thing that happens is that, if approved, Bill No. 8 has an effect on that as well.

Mr. Dixon: It's at level 132. I know that the minister alluded to this when we were in debate a few weeks ago — or something close to that. I ask because, over time, there are years when the fund is quite a bit higher than that range. I know that last year it was at 141 percent, so when you see the fund get to that level, the questions are sort of raised about where it needs to be and how high it has gotten. I appreciate that rebates occur when that is the case.

What sort of actions can the board take to stay within the parameters that have been given to it? The witness mentioned that range of, I think, 122 to 129 or something like that. What are the actions that the board takes on an annual or ongoing basis to try to find itself in that range?

Mr. Pike: On behalf of the board, first I will just comment that our investments are actually split between two different advisors, with essentially the same mandate to invest and earn us a rate of return in order to be able to provide for injured workers into the future.

As a board, we actually have a funding policy — and you will hear that referred to — that is actually designed to always bring us back into that range. Essentially, it says that, if we get over that, we reduce the rates to employers such that we start to migrate back into that range.

We've had some really, really great success over the years with our investments. As a result of that, the board says, "Let's move a bit quicker to get back into that range." The result of that has been the rebates that we have put out there. The board will be looking at that again before the end of 2020 just to see where we think we are and what we need to do.

We're absolutely committed to getting back in that range. We want to be in that range, but I also love the fact that our investments are doing so well that it keeps bobbing us up. It's hard for me to complain about that, but we will be looking at that, and we are committed to being in that range.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that, and I appreciate the answer. Like the witness says, it's not a bad problem to have for your investments to be doing better than anticipated.

I would like to move back to the issue of presumption. The general sense of the issue of presumption has sort of changed over the last number of years fairly rapidly. A number of years ago, there was the addition of cancers for specific types of employment, and then more recently, we have seen presumption added for mental health injuries and psychological injuries. Then of course now, with Bill No. 8, there is the expansion of that to a range of other types of employment.

I'm curious about what the cost implication has been of that growth of the expansion of presumption and what sort of — my colleague earlier asked about what the implications

would be for Wildland Fire, but would Bill No. 8 also contemplate the expansion of presumption for psychological injuries as well? I'm wondering what the witnesses can tell us about the implications on the fund, or the implications for the board, of that expansion of presumption.

Mr. Dieckmann: The implications for the expansion of presumption, from a technical perspective, isn't really going to change where we are right now. The claims that we are accepting — the majority of the claims for the PTSD presumption actually come from outside of the current group where the presumption applies. It applies, at this moment, to emergency response workers, but they account for sort of 30 to 40 percent of those PTSD claims that we get. The rest comes from all other industries. We have a variety of industries. We have had PTSD claims come from, well, pretty much every industry that we have, because a lot of times, people think that PTSD occurs because generally somebody witnessed something horrible or something happened to them. We actually get a lot of PTSD claims that arise because of physical injuries to workers as well. So, you have a traumatic incident; you fall off a ladder and break your leg — that can result in a psychological injury as well.

PTSD is just part of the claims that we accept. There are a number of other psychological injuries that we accept, and we accept those currently. Making the PTSD presumption more inclusive isn't going to really affect what we are seeing now. When the original PTSD presumption came in, we did start to see an increase in the number of claims coming in, which, in my view, is a good thing, because that says to me that there were probably people who were not seeking the help they needed and not putting in the claims when injury had occurred, but it has plateaued over the last three years.

As I said earlier, the PTSD claims do account for upward of 20 percent of our total costs of claims, but we are also seeing decreases in the cost of physical injuries and some of these other injuries, so our overall claims costs haven't gone up dramatically. We look at claims costs in two different ways: We have our current year claims costs, and we have previous or past year claims costs that we look at. Our current year claims costs have remained pretty steady, but with our previous year claims costs, we are starting to see the impact of those psychological injuries on those, just because the duration of them tends to be longer.

Employers have done a good job, and we have done a good job on injury prevention and return to work on those current year claims and reducing those costs, but the gains that we got there have been offset by the previous year claims.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you, I appreciate the answer. That leads to my next question, which is: With these types of injuries, they tend to have a longer tail, so to speak. If someone breaks their leg and misses work, their leg heals and they go back to work. With stress-related injuries, there can be a much longer duration of support needed. When we started introducing these types of injuries, I would anticipate that the growth won't be a dramatic increase at the beginning, but there will be more sustained, longer term cost implications. Is that

the general understanding? Has the board done any preparation for that in considering how to handle those additional claims?

Mr. Dieckmann: The way that our adjusting for cost works is that, in the first seven years of a claim, we don't start to really look at that long-term implication until those claims reach that maturity of about seven years. So, the original presumption, when it was put in place — we are starting to get those claims now, kind of reaching out to that seven years and getting the booking for the long term.

So, we will start to see impacts on the rates potentially, but as I said, other physical injuries and some of the other injuries are going down, and current year claims costs on those are going down. To this point, they have been offsetting. The picture will become clearer in sort of the next three to five years as to what those long-term implications are. As I have said, we seem to have levelled off in the numbers, and we are hoping that stabilizes. We are actually hoping that starts to go down with the introduction of the regulations for the prevention of violence and harassment in the workplace. We are hoping that will start to have an impact.

In our business, there are so many different factors that feed into it that you can't really say cause and effect — you know, one thing leads to a definite response in another.

Mr. Pike: Just one quick comment — what Mr. Dieckmann has already said — it is really safe to say that psychological injuries, in general, last longer and are more expensive.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate both the answers and agree very much.

I think it is obviously something we will have to monitor as the years go by. My last question, and Mr. Dieckmann alluded to it already, is in relation to the new violence and harassment in the workplace regulations. I am wondering if the witnesses can just provide us a brief update on where those are at and the current status.

Mr. Dieckmann: Yes, we spent quite a bit of time over the past year — since those regulations were passed by government, and that was September 4 of last year. They came into effect, and so we had a full year for implementation. We did a lot of work in that year. We developed a lot of materials for employers, for workers, and for the workplace. We developed sample safe work practices, sample safe job procedures, a number of materials — we developed a guide book for employers. We have provided training sessions for employers and for workers.

We have done a lot of work in that area and it has gone really, really well. Through all of last year, our safety officers, when they were out doing inspections, were also providing information to employers so that they could get prepared for the regulations coming in. Now that they are in place, the safety officers are going back and checking up and seeing if these are in place and we have found that people have been putting the policies and the procedures in place that they need.

From an enforcement perspective, we had anticipated quite a large uptick in complaints and that's something that we didn't actually see. I mean, we have seen an increase, but not as much as what we had originally anticipated. What we have done from

an enforcement perspective is, when we do receive a complaint, we go into the workplace and the first thing we do is we start asking: "Show us your policies; show us your procedures." We determine whether or not the measures that have been put in place by the workplace have actually been followed. It creates a really good opportunity for those conversations. In most instances, when we're dealing with the workers, they have been quite satisfied with the fact that we have gone in and looked and that the employers, in a lot of instances, have put things in place and we have found that they haven't actually followed them and so then we tell the employers that they need to follow through and they start working through those processes and they seem to work toward resolution. It would be a good question to ask us again next year because we're still in early days.

Mr. Dixon: Duly noted. With that, I'm happy to thank the witnesses, Mr. Dieckmann and Mr. Pike, for their time today on behalf of my colleagues. I'll turn it over to the minister to thank them as well.

Deputy Chair: Are there any further questions for the witnesses?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: On behalf of Committee of the Whole, I would like to thank Mark Pike, chair of the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, and Kurt Dieckmann, president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, for appearing as witnesses today.

Deputy Chair: Thank you. The witnesses are now excused.

Witnesses excused

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

May the House have a report from the Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 6, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021)*, and directed me to report progress.

Also, pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 4 adopted earlier today, witnesses appeared before Committee of the Whole to answer questions related to the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to

Speaker: This House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. Monday.

The House adjourned at 5:23 p.m.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 39

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, November 29, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier Government House Leader* Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
Hon. Nils Clarke	Riverdale North	Minister of Highways and Public Works; Environment
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Government House Leader* Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Minister of Economic Development; Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Jeanie McLean	Mountainview	Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

Currie Dixon	Leader of the Official Opposition Copperbelt North	Scott Kent	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Yvonne Clarke	Porter Creek Centre	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Emily Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Annie Blake	Vuntut Gwitchin

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

*Government House Leader: Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee to November 4, 2021; Hon. John Streicker from November 5, 2021

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, November 29, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.**

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.
We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. The following motions have not been placed on the Notice Paper as they are out of order: Motion No. 246, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge, and Motion No. 253, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin.

In addition, the following motion has been removed from the Order Paper as the action requested has been taken in whole or in part: Motion No. 221, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party.

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will proceed at this time with the Order Paper.

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I would like to take this opportunity to welcome to the gallery members from my crew at Highways and Public Works in both the IT department and for the tribute to road safety.

I have a list here, and I apologize in advance if it's incomplete. From the team that was involved with the implementation of the QR and PVC credentials project, I have Sean McLeish, Lyndsey Beal, Mark Burns, Greg Newby, Dave Rogers, and Lee O'Mara.

From the Highways and Public Works road crews, we have Kevin Boutilier, Greg Eikland, Kelly Dewdney, Mike Warren, and Ian Jim.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of highways maintenance crews

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I stand in the House today to pay tribute to the road crews that keep our roads and highways in the best condition possible so that we can all arrive safely at our destination. Every season, these crews meet the increasing challenges of a changing climate. They do an amazing job at adapting to new weather conditions and changing seasonal patterns.

We know that climate change is happening faster in the north, and it's affecting how we travel. A great example of this was last winter. I am sure that we all remember the exceptional levels of snow.

We saw unprecedented road closures, particularly in the south Klondike Highway area. Members will know that the south Klondike was also closed again just this morning due to an avalanche, and road crews have since cleared and opened the road. There were many avalanches that closed the road throughout the past winter. This highway is a vital transportation corridor between Alaska and the Yukon. It also allows Yukoners to access a winter playground in the White Pass. Our road crews work around the clock to clear avalanches off the roads. This opened an essential travel route, but it also let Yukoners enjoy their favourite winter activities.

During the pandemic, Mr. Speaker, I think we have realized how truly important these recreational activities are for our well-being. I know that everyone who was able to access the White Pass last winter appreciates the road crews for all the work that they did.

Besides the changing climate, maintaining roads in the Yukon is unique in many ways. We have a vast territory and therefore a large road network. The team at Highways and Public Works maintains roughly 4,800 kilometres of roads across the territory. That is roughly the distance between Whitehorse and Vancouver and back again. This is no small feat. Not only do our roadways cover large distances, but our communities are spaced out over the Yukon. Besides Old Crow, our connection to our communities is our roadways.

During the winter, snow and ice can threaten to close these transportation corridors. Our number one priority during the long winter season is keeping these connections safe and open. It takes a certain type of person who is equipped for this type of job. Our winter road crews are made up of hard-working individuals who have a "get the job done" kind of mindset. These people get up in the dark, long before the rest of us, just to ensure that we can all make it to work safely. I would like to thank these road crews for their commitment to their jobs. They continue to step up to meet the challenges of maintaining our northern road network during the coldest months of the year.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take a moment to ask everyone else to help our winter road crews do their job by yielding to winter equipment and exercising extra caution on the roads. Remember that the posted speed limits are only for ideal conditions. If you are driving in a snowstorm or when the temperatures are fluctuating, please slow down. Take your time and drive carefully. It is not worth the risk of an accident.

Lastly, before you travel, check the new 511 Yukon mobile app or website to get the most up-to-date information on road conditions and closures.

Applause

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the importance of road safety across the territory.

For many, winter driving can be scary. The roads are icy and conditions are often less than ideal. Accidents can and do happen, even on the best kept roads. It is important that everyone does their part on our roads to keep our roads as safe as can be. Drive to conditions of the road, keep an eye out for

others who may need assistance, and keep your car in top winter driving condition.

As the minister said, the Yukon has thousands of kilometres of highway connecting our communities and allowing people to flow to and from the territory. Crews across the territory have no shortage of roads to keep cleared and sanded. They are out there every day — often all day and night during heavier snowfalls — and it is our hope that motorists keep the concept of “slow down, move over” in mind. Slow down and move over on the roads when you see vehicles on the side of the road with lights flashing. These vehicles could include emergency medical services, police, fire, plow trucks, tow trucks, and more.

Watch for trucks that are actively blading and sanding in the roadways. Be aware, pay attention to vehicle signage, and give them space. They are working and need room to do their jobs. Again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize and thank those who work to keep our highways clear to ensure that residents, visitors, EMS, freight haulers, and others are all able to travel safely throughout the territory.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate road safety.

On my way to work this morning, I thought about how lucky we are to have plowed roads to travel on, even during the snowy winter. Already today, thousands of people have made their way to school, to work, and to appointments, errands, and activities, and they did so safely thanks to the work of many folks behind the scenes.

The snowplow drivers, the highway maintenance staff, and even the people who took the time to shovel their sidewalks — thank you to the efforts of people across our territory because, thanks to them, people can travel through their day safely. On behalf of the Yukon NDP, thank you to all of you.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling a letter from the Yukon Residential Landlord Association.

I also have for tabling an e-mail from the president of Air North outlining concerns with proposed last-minute amendments to the Yukon Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety legislation currently before the House.

I also have for tabling an e-mail from the Yukon Chamber of Commerce expressing concerns with the last-minute amendments to the Yukon Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety legislation currently before the House.

I also have for tabling an e-mail from Carmacks Mayor Lee Bodie stating the municipality’s support for the changes to the *Assessment and Taxation Act* that would allow for the better building program to be developed.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have for tabling today a legislative return in response to questions from the Member for Takhini-Kopper King from October 21, 2021.

Mr. Dixon: I have for tabling the most recent position from the City of Whitehorse with regard to the better building program. It’s a letter addressed to the Minister of Community Services.

Ms. McLeod: I have for tabling a letter from the Town of Watson Lake expressing their concern with the better building program.

Ms. White: I have for tabling today two documents: one from the Village of Mayo asking that the municipal and taxation act amendments be postponed until the spring, and an e-mail from the Village of Teslin against the better building program as proposed.

Ms. Blake: I have for tabling a report from the chief coroner of the Yukon, dated November 29, 2021, announcing the current number of deaths from opioid overdoses.

Speaker: Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 7 — response

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise in response to Petition No. 7, tabled in the House on November 17, 2021. I would first like to offer my condolences — and all of our condolences — for those who are grieving the loss of a loved one. We know that many people in Mayo, and in fact across the Yukon, have felt the devastating effects that can result from substance use. I thank the supporters for bringing the petition forward. We recognize that this is a crisis for the citizens of Mayo and for all Yukoners. I appreciate the opportunity to respond to this urgent matter.

Many of these issues brought forward in this petition are seen beyond the community of Mayo. We must collectively work together to address mental health and substance use and law enforcement challenges across the territory. It is critical that we remember that we are all on the same side of this issue with the same goal, which is that Yukoners lead healthy, happy lives.

We are committed to ensuring that Yukoners have access to support where they are and when they need it. The wellness of Yukoners is the highest priority for our government. We have made concrete steps in this area, particularly as we continue to deal with the added stress of the COVID-19 pandemic; however, we must clearly work together to do more. Our Mental Wellness and Substance Use unit provides mental wellness and substance use counselling to Yukoners across the territory. This includes rapid-access counselling services available within 72 hours, five days a week. Again, we must make these services more responsive to Yukoners in need. We must make it easier for people to reach out for help.

Mental Wellness and Substance Use services are available in Mayo. A counsellor resides in the community and provides

mental wellness and substance use counselling as well as emotional support for residents. In addition, a child and youth counsellor from Dawson City travels to Mayo on a biweekly basis to provide services in the local school and community. There is a mental health nurse in Dawson City who is also able to serve the community of Mayo. The mental health nurse is available to provide supports, in coordination with a psychiatrist or other medical staff, for individuals impacted by complex mental health and substance use disorders.

Mental Wellness and Substance Use staff work closely with an opioid prevention coordinator in Whitehorse for the delivery of harm-reduction workshops and materials in Mayo and other communities. This includes take-home Naloxone kits for distribution in communities. Family and Children's Services is also available to respond if social work supports for children, youth, and their families are required.

We have made a commitment that a safe supply of opioids will be available to people with substance use disorders in an effort to address the opioid crisis in the territory — but one solution, Mr. Speaker.

The Yukon government provides funding to the Canadian Mental Health Association Yukon division and All Genders Yukon Society to facilitate counselling, group sessions, and other support services. Mental Wellness and Substance Use also offers services such as withdrawal management, and there is no wait-list for that at this time.

However, we recognize that the level of need is significant and that a coordinated, urgent response is required. We are always considering ways that we can enhance supports and services. Our partners across the territory, including First Nations, municipalities, NGOs, the RCMP, and people with lived experience, are critical partners in this response. We work with communities across the territory to understand their needs and how we can best provide support.

This petition is part of that important conversation. Consideration of a state of emergency is only an option if it would provide additional tools to protect Yukoners. This is a step that we must consider, together. There is no doubt that we are in a difficult place right now. Together we must actively work to address today's challenges and look toward the future. We must continue to improve our high-quality, accessible, and consistent care — just steps we have taken that need to continue. This needs to be a community response. What we are doing is not enough if it is not reaching the people who need it.

Our government is working with our partners in all government departments noted in the petition to hold a mental wellness summit where participants can identify meaningful solutions — including health, wellness, and law enforcement solutions — and a path forward together. This petition is from many community members who want to see changes for their community. This needs to be a multi-government approach. We look forward to working with the Town of Mayo, its citizens, and the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation as we go forward to address this important critical issue.

Speaker: Are there any petitions to be presented?
Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Ms. Tredger: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to end evictions without cause.

Ms. Blake: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to adopt all 54 articles of the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to make available a support person at vaccine clinics to help people obtain their vaccine credentials.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to apply for an exemption under the *Controlled Drug and Substances Act* to decriminalize personal use of all illegal drugs in the Yukon.

Ms. White: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to widely inform the public about availabilities of non-mRNA vaccines in the Yukon and the timeline to request appointments.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

COVID-19 vaccination verification

Hon. Mr. Clarke: This past fall, we knew that Yukoners would need a secure proof of vaccination. We worked quickly to develop a service where one could obtain the proof of vaccination credential online or on the phone. Not only that, but Highways and Public Works — and the Yukon — was one of the first jurisdictions to meet the federal standards for proof of vaccination credentials. This has been essential in allowing Yukoners to travel to other jurisdictions, internationally, and is now needed to access designated settings and services in the Yukon.

With the new vaccination requirements in the Yukon, the proof of vaccination credential will remain essential in our efforts to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Since the new requirements came into effect, we have asked designated establishments and services to visually verify the proof of vaccination credential. This meant looking at the proof of vaccination credential and photo ID to confirm that someone is fully vaccinated. We wanted to make this process easier and faster for Yukon establishments and services.

On November 24, we launched the Yukon vaccination verifier app. This app helps Yukon businesses and services check the vaccination status of their patrons. It is now freely available on both the Google Play store and Apple App Store for anyone to download. You will need an Internet connection

to download the app, but after it is downloaded, you can use the app without the Internet. By way of update from the department today, I am advised that the apps have been downloaded approximately just over 2,000 times, and currently we have just over 25,000 personal, discrete, unique vaccination credentials that have been downloaded.

This design was intentional to ensure that the remote areas of our territory with limited Internet connectivity would be able to use the app. The app will scan the QR codes located on any proof of vaccination credential that meets the federal standards. Currently, the majority of provinces and territories meet those standards.

When we start using any new form of technology, it brings up questions of privacy and security. I want to be clear with Yukoners that we designed both the proof of vaccination credential and the app to protect Yukoners' privacy. The app does not record, store, or report any data at all to the Yukon government or any third party. The QR code only contains the minimum amount of information needed, and this is the same information that is available visually. The proof of vaccination credential does not link to any other records.

These features will help keep Yukoners' personal information safe when using these services. We know that this will take some time to get used to, but we believe that the app will help make this transition easier. Moving forward, and as we learn to adapt to living with COVID-19, Highways and Public Works will continue to support the technology needed to forge ahead.

Mr. Hassard: We understand that the Yukon vaccine verifier was developed in concert with the Liberal government's new COVID-19 rules that took effect earlier this month, and I will note, Mr. Speaker, that the Yukon Party is happy to see the app now available as it will enable businesses and anyone who needs to check the verification status to do so with a touch of a few buttons and a quick scan.

The one question that I do have for the minister, Mr. Speaker, is what happens to those who do not have the proper identification to go along with proving that they are vaccinated. Of course, this scenario would mainly pertain to teenagers who do not yet have a driver's licence.

Again, I would just like to thank all of those who worked behind the scenes to get this app up and running.

Ms. White: The Yukon NDP is happy to respond to a November 23 press release letting Yukoners know that the new Yukon vaccination verifier app is now available for download. Thank you to all of those behind the scenes at Highways and Public Works. We recognize that you have done an incredible amount of work on a tight deadline, but what we would really like to know is what the Liberal government is doing to help folks without technology get copies of their vaccine status. I can assure the minister that accessing phone support is daunting for many, not to mention the need for a mailing address and more.

Will a station be set up at a central location, like the lobby of the convention centre, to help folks get physical copies of

what they need? If not, why not? What about Yukoners' ability to access non-mRNA vaccines? What is being done to advertise that both the Janssen and the Pfizer vaccine are available to those who are hesitant about Moderna? It is great that these alternatives are available, but having a small write-up buried in the yukon.ca website isn't enough. According to that website, these alternate vaccines are only available for two days in Whitehorse.

Now that the government has decided to offer alternate vaccine options, are there plans to continue offering them for a longer period of time?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Briefly, on both of the queries made by both the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin and the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, yes, the process of facilitating and making it easier for those between the ages of 12 and 17 to receive their general identification is a process that we are engaging in between departments. There is more to come on that, but I have certainly been briefed on that, and I support the member opposite's submissions on that.

Of course, as well, we will make all efforts possible to ensure that a personal vaccine credential status can be accessed by all Yukoners who wish to receive it and we will facilitate that process, so I will take those comments back to my department.

Throughout the pandemic, we have seen a need to provide our citizens with e-services that address new and evolving issues related to COVID-19. Our information, communication, and technology team has been working behind the scenes to support our COVID-19 response every step of the way. I want to take a moment to thank them for their hard work and dedication. Since launching the secure proof of vaccination credential, now over 25,000 Yukoners have downloaded their credentials. For anyone who has not yet received their credentials, it is certainly not too late. It can be done at all times. Yukoners can request their proof of vaccination credential online at yukon.ca/vaccine-proof or by phone by calling 1-877-374-0425.

Mr. Speaker, it is great to see so many Yukoners doing their part to keep each other healthy and safe. As designated businesses and services begin to require proof of vaccination from their clients, I ask that we all be patient during this transition. It will take some time to get used to. The Yukon vaccine verifier app will help with that transition, and I encourage Yukoners and business owners to download the app for free today. Prior to the app being launched, we worked with businesses, organizations, and First Nations to help ensure that they knew how to use this new piece of technology.

Last week, our government also announced the vaccine verification rebate that provides Yukon businesses and organizations with a 50-percent rebate, up to \$500, toward the purchase of new equipment needed to use the app and check proof of vaccination credentials. We wanted to make sure that this transition was as seamless as possible, and we provided the proper training and support for Yukoners to feel comfortable while using this app.

At this time, as is the case in all Canadian jurisdictions, the app cannot scan international proof of vaccination credentials. In the meantime, if you do encounter an international proof of vaccination, you will need to visually verify it. Once an internationally recognized standard of vaccination credentials is in place, we will have the ability to make those updates to the app.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all Yukoners and Yukon businesses who are doing their best to follow the recommendations from the acting chief medical officer of health. Our government will continue to work with them to ensure that they have the tools that they need to operate their businesses safely, reduce the spread of COVID-19, and keep our communities healthy and safe.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Mining assessment process

Mr. Kent: So, on December 20, 2017, the Coffee mining project was submitted to YESAB for an environmental and socio-economic assessment. After almost four years in the process, the YESA board submitted their final screening report on October 12 of this year. Ever so briefly, there was light at the end of the tunnel. However, today, the project has unfortunately run into another government delay and has been referred back to YESAB by the federal decision bodies based on concerns that they have.

In January, the Premier got upset with the federal government and issued a public statement criticizing them when the Kudz Ze Kayah project was referred back by Canada.

What is the Premier's position on this project being referred back? Will he be issuing a statement condemning the federal government for the delays and uncertainty like he did before?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will take issue with the preamble to the question. I don't necessarily agree with the emotional approach that the Yukon Party took on my correspondence with Ottawa. However, I will say that, when it comes to all of the regulatory processes when it comes to mining, the mineral and mining exploration industries remain of central importance to Yukon's economy, to our way of life, and to contributing significantly to the territory's economic performance throughout the pandemic as well. The Yukon was one of only two jurisdictions in Canada to experience GDP growth in 2020. That was largely thanks to the people in the mining industry.

We have been clear that the Government of Canada needs to take steps to streamline these processes going forward to ensure that the clarity is there and certainty for the mining industry. Those were my comments about another project in another time.

We are absolutely closely monitoring and participating in the Coffee Gold mine project as it continues through the executive committee screening under the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act*. We are encouraged that the executive committee issued a final screening report

recommending the project proceed subject to terms and conditions.

Mr. Kent: So, no statement from the Premier, then, on this project being referred back.

Part of the delays related to this project are related to the Yukon Resource Gateway project of which Canada is a major funder. This road project originally was tied to part of the Coffee mine, and as a result, Infrastructure Canada was a decision body. However, in 2019, the Yukon government changed the scope of Gateway and removed the Coffee mine access from these planned roads, but they forgot to tell Infrastructure Canada.

An October 8, 2021 letter from Infrastructure Canada to YESAB states that part of the federal government concern was — and I quote: “To date, the Yukon Government has not discussed with INFC the specifics of this contribution, including what aspects of these road projects are currently being considered by the Executive Committee to be part of the Project and its screening.”

Then, last week, Infrastructure Canada indicated that the Yukon government finally notified them that they are not involved in this project.

Does the government recognize that their failure to inform the feds of changes led to delays?

Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: What I can say is that my very first meeting in Ottawa back in 2017 was to talk with the Infrastructure minister and to discuss Gateway. At that time, we talked about the importance of making sure that Gateway was divided up into individual projects and that, in each one, we would work with the affected First Nation to discuss, negotiate, and decide whether or not that project can and should move ahead.

I certainly did talk about Coffee at that time. We talked about many of the projects there. My understanding is that Infrastructure Canada has just written a letter saying that this is not of concern for them. I am happy to connect with Infrastructure Canada and work with my colleague, the Minister of Highways and Public Works, and make sure that information is flowing well. I can also state that I sat in a meeting — my very first meeting in Ottawa, and it was with the Infrastructure minister — and I did discuss all of the Gateway projects.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for those remarks; however, the facts of the matter are that, on October 8, 2021, Infrastructure Canada wrote YESAB to state that the Yukon government had not discussed with them the specifics of their contribution on the Coffee mine project with respect to Resource Gateway.

Last week, they indicated that the Yukon government has finally notified them that they are not involved in this project and they are not a decision body, so the communication challenges go on.

Both the Kudz Ze Kayah and the Coffee project have been hit with delay after delay in the assessment process, so what assurances can the Premier give to the proponent of the Coffee

project that all timelines as set out in YESAB will be adhered to through this latest government-imposed delay?

Hon. Mr. Silver: As the member opposite would know from his former role as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, clarification on recommendations in the screening report being put back into the executive committee is the place where those conversations can happen. The narrative that they are stringing together doesn't hold water, in my opinion. We are working with the government of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the Selkirk First Nation, White River First Nation, and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun.

Again, given Canada's decision to refer this back to the executive committee, which is not necessarily a remarkable consideration — it would be very much status quo for a government to do so, for clarifying questions. This would be the opportunity to answer and clarify those questions. We are closely monitoring and participating as it moves through the executive committee. Again, we will be very critical if this makes for unwanted or unnecessary delays because that is our commitment over here on the Yukon Liberal Party side of the Legislative Assembly. We will do everything that we can to make sure the process is streamlined and to work with YESAB and also the Water Board in those pursuits.

As we know, we have done that with the Water Board with a memorandum of understanding with the secretariat and the Water Board, making sure that folks know the procedures and all of the different responsibilities that come with those decisions. This will be no different; we will make sure that we continue to monitor the situation.

Question re: Mining assessment process

Mr. Hassard: BMC Minerals submitted their proposal for the Kudz Ze Kayah mine project on March 23, 2017. The executive committee of the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board issued their final report and recommendation in October 2020, which was then referred back to YESAB in January 2021. We understand that the legislative deadline to issue a decision document was May 5, 2021. Today is November 29, and there has been no decision document issued. That would mean that the Yukon government and the Government of Canada are offside of the legal deadline.

Can the Premier confirm when the legal deadline for a decision document was and whether or not the decision document for this project will be completed within the legislative timeline?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Unfortunately, I have no new information for the member opposite from the last time that we were on our feet in the Legislative Assembly talking about BMC and the process here. We are considering the results, obviously, of the executive committee's referral conclusion and screening reports and are collaborating with the federal decision body on this project. There was an election in there, which didn't help with delays, but I would say that the delays were there even before the election. Getting ministers up and running as well further exacerbated the situation.

At the same time, we have been very vocal as to our continuing consultation when it comes to the Kaska First Nation on the Kudz Ze Kayah project in a meaningful way that meets our obligations and supports our commitment to stronger relationships with the First Nation. We were also very vocal in our concerns that the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board's executive committee issued a referral conclusion stating that the four participating folks were deadlocked in the consideration — the reconsideration — or the screening report.

Again, we are continuing to support responsible mining resource development and maintaining commitments to make sure that the regulatory processes are as streamlined as possible.

Mr. Hassard: There were a lot of words there but nothing in terms of a response.

The latest correspondence related to the Kudz Ze Kayah project posted on the YESAB website states that the decision document was anticipated to be issued in October 2021. Again, that deadline has come and gone without a decision document being issued.

So, why hasn't the Yukon government lived up to its commitment made in the letter to have a decision document completed, and when do the Liberals expect a decision document to be issued?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. It is true that, as a result of a deadlock, the executive committee concluded that the original screening report issued on October 21, 2020 stood as the considered recommendation.

Now, of course, we are not the only government in this process, Mr. Speaker, and we have been knocking at the door of the feds for a while on this one. Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Natural Resources Canada, and ourselves are the decision bodies and are required to consult with each other with a view to making those decision documents conform. We meet very regularly with the Northern Projects Management Office, which is coordinating on behalf of the federal decision bodies, to discuss any issues and concerns and to collaborate in reaching decisions. You have a plethora of ministers who have been working with the regulatory process, but also with the proponent and with the First Nations, to do what we can within our side of this responsibility to get to a decision as quickly as possible and also maintain the sanctity of our regulatory systems.

Mr. Hassard: I would hate to see if the Premier was taking his time. You know, in early 2017, the Liberals promised the mining industry that they would put in place a collaborative framework dealing with timelines and reassessments for mining projects. Of course, industry members took him at his word that he would actually do this, and, of course, we know that this is one of many promises that the Liberals have broken. Now we find out that they have not met their own legal timelines with respect to major mining projects.

So, why did the Liberals break their promise to the mining industry from five years ago to put in place a collaborative framework?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will respectfully disagree with my colleague from across the way as far as what we have done to streamline and what we have done to work on both regulatory processes. It is interesting that we don't get a lot of questions from members opposite on the Water Board process, for example. You look back at the genesis of a lot of conversations coming from the MOU that we signed with the First Nations, based upon litigation from the previous government's perspective and approach when it comes to the mining industry, which was a complete and utter failure.

So, moving forward, we are meeting more regularly with the Water Board and with YESAB than comparatively. We are absolutely committed to making sure that these processes are streamlined, making sure also that we don't go away from our responsibilities to the environment, which is extremely important. These institutions are extremely important in the Yukon, a one-stop shop when it comes to the regulatory process. We need to make sure that we meet regularly with both the Water Board and the folks on the board for YESA to ensure that the processes are as streamlined as possible.

Question re: Opioid crisis

Ms. Blake: Today we learned that the Yukon's rate of opioid-related death has surpassed BC. It means that the Yukon is now the jurisdiction with the most opioid-related deaths per capita in Canada. This is not a record that any province or territory wants to hold. Opioid deaths now represent more than one in five deaths that are investigated by the coroner this year. The rate of opioid deaths is beyond alarming. There is only one word for it: a tragedy. The people of Mayo have sent us a plea for help but we know that every community in the Yukon is grappling with this.

When will the government declare a public health emergency in the Yukon to help fight this devastating opioid crisis?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the opportunity to rise again today to speak about the importance of the declarations and the recognition by all levels of government in this territory with respect to the crisis that we are facing involving opioids and the use of opioids here in the territory.

I actually very much respect the chief coroner of the Yukon Territory. We have worked closely together. I also appreciate her candid words in her release today. She speaks very candidly about how there is no part of society that is unaffected, certainly not in the Yukon Territory in a community this small. She speaks about how we are on a "frightening trajectory"; those are her words. She speaks about how this can be seen as nothing less than a medical crisis, all of which I agree with and our government agrees with. There are young people affected and others well into their 70s. She also indicates that we simply cannot continue to stigmatize this horrible process of addictions and the use of drugs here in the territory. I look forward to continuing my response.

Ms. Blake: This is a medical crisis. Too many Yukoners have died. This report says that numbers tragically increased over the past three months. We are on a frightening path.

The report also states — and I quote: "... we have seen the drug supply become more and more toxic and unstable."

Thanks to the confidence and supply agreement, the government has started to roll out a safe supply of opioids, but the safe supply hasn't made it to the communities. Yukon communities need this.

When the minister was asked last week about it, the response was a lot of words but no firm commitment. Will a safe supply of opioids be available in all Yukon communities by the end of this year?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think that it's incredibly important to continue this conversation that is sparked by the chief coroner's report today. We know that all of the deaths — 21 of them in this year, since January 1 — involved opioids in various forms of fentanyl and a large percentage also involved cocaine and also alcohol and benzodiazepines. These are involved in some of the fatalities.

What I think is incredibly important is that we get the message out that the drug supply here in the territory is more toxic, perhaps than ever. She notes also in her report that the use of naloxone kits is helpful but that many people are dying alone in their homes without the opportunity to use those kits or not knowing about or having them. The concern, of course, is that the kits are becoming less effective against the increasing toxicity of drugs.

If we have a message today to Yukoners, we must get the message out that there is an increasing toxicity in the drug supply here in the territory and that they must take care, and we must help in this process.

Ms. Blake: This situation is devastating and it has been going on since 2016. While the minister is convinced that the government's response is adequate, let me quote again from today's chief coroner's report: "These drugs are killing our children, our parents, our aunts and uncles, sisters, brothers, nieces and nephews, our grand children and yes, our grandparents ... These deaths are occurring in young people barely out of their teens and to those well into their 70s." This is not time for more excuses and empty responses. People are dying, often alone in their homes.

Will the minister deploy emergency resources in communities to help save lives?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I want to be clear that I haven't said that the government's response is adequate; I have not said that. In fact, for five minutes in the response to the petition earlier today, I said that it is not adequate, that there is lots of opportunity for people to reach out for help, but that it doesn't matter if we're not reaching them where they are or if there isn't the opportunity for them to reach out for help when they need it in an emergency situation.

What I have said is that we must work together as communities. We must work together at all levels of government in order to address this situation.

We often get criticized that, as a government, we make decisions on behalf of communities and then that is a criticism, but when we commit to working together with communities at all levels of government to come up with meaningful solutions that mean something to communities, we get criticized for not

just deciding something on behalf of the community. We are not going to do that, Mr. Speaker. We are going to work with our communities. We are going to recognize that this is a crisis at all levels — law enforcement, health and social services, justice, community leaders, First Nation governments, and those who have lived experience. We are going to work on it together to try to address this critical situation.

Question re: Building renovation program

Ms. White: In 2019 during a throne speech, this government announced that municipal governments would be responsible for a residential and commercial retrofit program. Needless to say, municipal governments were surprised. Being told that loans would be collected through municipal local improvement charges left communities with many questions and fewer answers. Two years later, municipal officials are still in the exact same situation. They have many questions, few answers, and are getting tired of being told by the minister that it is now or never. Forcing municipalities into accepting a program that they have never seen is not an acceptable way to work with other levels of government.

Will the government commit to postponing amendments to the municipal and taxation acts until they have all municipalities onside?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am happy to talk about this issue on the floor of the House this afternoon. We are in a climate emergency, Mr. Speaker. I have said this again and again. We have seen the effects of what is happening in our climate in Marsh Lake and BC and in other areas. We have committed to taking action on climate change in the face of the emergency. This enabling legislation is one of those actions.

I take exception to the preamble from the Leader of the Third Party. We are not forcing any municipality to sign on — absolutely not. This is enabling legislation that allows them to come on at their decision sometime in the future. All this does is that it gives us the ability to start designing a program that municipalities and I can then start working on, into the future. I have the support of some communities in the territory; I do not have the support of all communities at this point. I know that there are some reservations because there is some trepidation and some unanswered questions. I have said, in writing, that I am more than happy to work with municipalities on this issue over the coming winter to make sure that their questions are answered as we develop regulations together and develop a program together.

I stand by those commitments. I am hoping that this legislation passes the House tomorrow so that we can actually start to act on climate change and get our greenhouse gases down 12 kilotonnes by 2030.

Ms. White: It is interesting, because I would suggest that municipalities and their councillors and mayors getting phone calls on the weekend would say that it feels a lot like forcing the issue.

So, many — if not most — municipalities have already told the minister that they don't have staff capacity for such a big program, but the minister is not listening. This is the very same

minister who chose to table the legislation that would directly impact municipalities weeks ahead of municipal elections.

But he is also assuring them that, once the bill is passed, things will be different. The minister has committed that a joint committee would be struck this winter to develop terms of reference, and he has also directed municipalities — in the same breath — to provide names for this committee by the first week of December.

So, Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit to postpone the bill until the spring, still create this committee, work with municipalities, and then bring the bill back once all municipalities are onside?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: In 2019 before the throne speech was given, I met with communities. I sat down with them and we talked through — they asked to see whether we could use the Yukon Housing Corporation. We went off and did a bunch of work, and we came back and explained why that approach would not be as strong as working with municipalities.

We have been working with them for two years now and we will continue to work with them, but there are places that want to go right now: Marsh Lake, Carcross, Carmacks, Old Crow, Pelly, Haines Junction, and Beaver Creek. All of those communities would like to start. Let's start, and then we will work with all of the other municipalities and work with them to deal with this burden that is coming to them — about collecting the local improvement charges afterward and making sure that they are whole through that.

The process, as everyone can see, is through the Energy Solutions Centre. That is how we are going to do this work.

It's a good project. It's great for our communities. We are working with municipalities to get them there, too. In the meantime, we ask that the opposition not kill this bill for all those other communities.

Ms. White: I appreciate the minister's response, but it's important to note that a long list of those were unincorporated communities that the Yukon government is already responsible for.

By the letters tabled today, it seems that municipal governments aren't buying what the minister is desperately trying to sell. Neither the Yukon NDP nor municipalities are disputing the importance of retrofits. The Yukon NDP, however, has been clear that we won't support a bill that is essentially forcing municipalities into something that they have never agreed to.

Municipalities are simply asking that these amendments be held off until the spring, giving them time to get answers, working together, and seeing how to best implement this program for their communities. Both opposition parties have been vocal on this issue. The minister knows full well that, if we put it to a vote, the legislation most likely won't pass.

Why is he purposely torpedoing his own legislation? Is blaming opposition parties more important than creating good legislation and working with our municipal partners?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I really do have to take exception with the Leader of the Third Party's preamble again. I want to be perfectly clear: This legislation that we have before the House now is enabling legislation. The municipalities have

every opportunity to opt in to it at their leisure. There is no obligation. “Don’t pay a cent” event — that’s what this is. There is no obligation. It’s a “don’t pay a cent” event until they are more than ready to come on board of their own volition.

I have said in this House, under ATIPP and other things, that they are self-governing municipalities. They can do what they want. That is the same principle that I’m carrying forward here. They can come in. I have been working with them for the last several months. My colleague has been working with them for years. We are going to work through these issues, but the enabling legislation — which is critical to take action on climate change in all unincorporated municipalities, like my colleague has said this afternoon.

It is enabling legislation. In these times, Community Services will work with municipalities to make sure that they have their questions and their concerns answered and that they are made whole in the face of this program. But the enabling legislation comes first. Once I have permission in this House to build a program, I will do it. I am not putting a lot of time into a program before we have permission to proceed.

Question re: Whistle Bend school

Ms. Clarke: The Liberal government has mismanaged the construction of the delayed Whistle Bend school project. On November 21, 2019, the former Minister of Highways and Public Works stated that the Liberal government had budgeted \$32 million for the project. Then, on July 29 of this year, the Liberal government awarded a \$42.8-million contract for the delayed Whistle Bend elementary school. So, before construction even started, the school was already \$10 million overbudget.

Can the minister explain why the new Whistle Bend school is already \$10 million overbudget?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the opportunity to speak about the construction of the first elementary school to be built in the last 25 years, including 14 years of Yukon Party governance. Building a new school for the community of Whistle Bend is a high priority for the Yukon government. Highways and Public Works has worked with the Department of Education and the project advisory committee throughout the project to ensure that the school design incorporates important community elements.

Ketza Construction Corporation was awarded the design/build contract this summer and detailed design work has begun. Construction of this school is planned to be completed by the 2023-24 school year. As the member opposite indicated, there have been some cost pressures, and the member opposite has also heard that there are supply chain issues with respect to that and that there have been inflationary impacts of labour, lumber, structural steel, and other elements that were not necessarily to be anticipated when this project was being planned —

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Clarke: In November 2019, the former Minister of Highways and Public Works stated that the budget for the Whistle Bend school was \$32 million. The contract that was awarded for construction is \$42.8 million. So, before a single

shovel was in the ground, the project was massively overbudget.

I would like to move on to the major project delays related to this school. A confidential briefing note to the former minister that we received through access to information indicates that construction was originally scheduled to start in June 2021. However, a government press release from October 19, 2021 states that substantial construction will not start until spring next year. Can the minister tell us why this school is now delayed almost a year?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. Even under the member opposite’s scenario where construction was to commence in June 2021, ground was cleared by the fall of 2021. The work is commencing.

Sure, there’s a scenario where the member opposite is saying — so the bottom line is that there have not been significant delays on this project. The community of Whistle Bend — a growing, vibrant community and the fastest growing community in the Yukon right now — very much looks forward to having a state-of-the-art, energy-efficient, progressive school for its growing child-age population.

We know — and I’ve heard from the member opposite clearly in the Legislative Assembly from time to time — about the concern that Whistle Bend residents have with respect to traffic going in and out of Whistle Bend, which, of course, is significantly exacerbated by the fact that there isn’t currently either an elementary or high school in Whistle Bend.

So, there are good times ahead for the residents of Whistle Bend with this school.

Ms. Clarke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good times ahead. Thank you.

The Whistle Bend school is another project mismanaged by the Liberals that will come in late and overbudget. The original budget was \$32 million. They blew that budget by over \$10 million. The original construction start date was June 2021. They blew that timeline by almost a year. During the spring election, the Liberal platform committed to — quote: “... establish a Whistle Bend School Council in spring 2021.”

However, last week, the Minister of Education issued a document stating that the school council will only be set up in the spring of 2022. Can the minister tell us why the Liberals have blown every single budget and missed every single timeline related to the Whistle Bend school?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to stand and talk about the Whistle Bend school, which is great news for Yukon. As the Minister of Highways and Public Works has pointed out, it’s the first new elementary school in decades. The Liberal Party is delivering on our commitments. The Yukon Party had their chance; they didn’t deliver this.

I want to be clear that this is a great news story for Yukoners. Education is vitally important to the well-being of our communities. Whistle Bend is a growing community. We are very proud. The Minister of Highways and Public Works and I attended, alongside Ketza and members of the Kwanlin Dün and Ta’an Kwäch’än, a blessing ceremony for this land site.

We have good intentions for our communities, and education is a very big part of that. We will be establishing a school council and an attendance area which will be established for the new Whistle Bend elementary school in preparation for the May 2022 school council elections. Once established, they will participate in the selection process for a principal and exercise the other duties of a school council.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Before proceeding to the Orders of the Day, the Chair will make a statement regarding a point of order raised by the Member for Lake Laberge during debate on Motion No. 236 on Wednesday, November 24, 2021.

After reviewing the Blues, the Chair finds that the statement made by the Premier included terms such as: "Yukoners know that the Yukon Party doesn't actually believe this..." and "Yukoners also know that the Yukon Party consistently spreads misinformation..."

This is tending toward accusing another member of uttering a deliberate falsehood. I would caution all members to temper their remarks so that it is always clear that they are not accusing members of uttering deliberate falsehoods — either directly or indirectly.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 10: *Act to Amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021)* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 10, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 10, entitled *Act to Amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 10, entitled *Act to Amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I thank the House for the discussion that we have had to date on Bill No. 10. As I have mentioned in previous remarks, the tabled amendments to the *Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act* satisfy the accepted recommendations of the 2016 Judicial Compensation Commission's final report. The proposed amendments to the *Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act* clarify and expand the scheme for how reductions are applied to pension benefit amounts in the event that a member elects an early commencement of pension benefits. They also clarify that a five-year guarantee applies to all pensions payable, including for joint and survivor pensions for a judge with a spouse. Lastly, they clarify that child benefits, in terms of pension

amounts, are payable under both the registered and supplemental pension plans by codifying the scheme for disbursement of pension amounts to judges' children.

These amendments ensure that the provisions governing the supplementary judicial pension plan are consistent with those of the judiciary registered pension plan and confirm that pension amounts are payable to the children of judges under both plans.

Mr. Speaker, I recommend that the members of this Legislative Assembly support the passing of the *Act to Amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021)*, also known as Bill No. 10, as a means to ensure that the accepted recommendations of the 2016 Judicial Compensation Commission are fully implemented.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for third reading of Bill No. 10 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 10 has passed this House.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

Chair (Ms. Blake): Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Motion re appearance of witnesses

Committee of the Whole Motion No. 5

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. until 5:30 p.m. on Monday, November 29, 2021, Dr. André Corriveau, Yukon's acting chief medical officer of health, and Dr. Jesse Kancir, medical officer of health, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. until 5:30 p.m. on Monday, November 29, 2021, Dr. André Corriveau, Yukon's acting chief medical officer of health, and Dr. Jesse Kancir, medical officer of health, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Motion agreed to

Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Deputy Chair: (Ms. Tredger): Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 202: Second Appropriation Act 2021-22

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Department of Health and Social Services — continued

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, I am joined this afternoon by Deputy Minister Stephen Samis and Assistant Deputy Minister Karen Chan with the Department of Health and Social Services. I thank them very much for being here.

I have some remarks that I believe I had not completed when we were last here and I am very pleased to be able to take the opportunity to review some of the numbers in the supplemental budget in response to some of the questions that have been sent our way. Hopefully, they will provide more answers and ultimately help members opposite direct their questions.

Just as a review, the total operation and maintenance request in this supplemental budget is \$16.9 million. The total capital request is \$5.8 million. The operation and maintenance request from Health and Social Services is made up, really, of two main areas. They relate to supporting Yukoners in our various program areas and meeting COVID-19 and vaccination needs to support Yukoners. I have some more details with respect to those.

First, the highlights of various program changes, I think, are important for today's opportunity for debate. There is an increase of \$103,000 for an environmental health analyst to support the coordination and implementation of environmental health policy in support of *Our Clean Future*.

There is an increase of \$150,000 to support the Southern Lakes flood response.

There is an additional funding request of \$264,000 to support substance use and addictions for health promotion coordination, which has a full recovery available for it.

In the area of Family and Children's Services, there is an important increase to support cultural activities for children in out-of-home care. I noted that recently when we did a statement regarding additional services for children. This \$1.3-million increase is partially recoverable through our federal partners.

Health and Social Services is proposing to provide funding of \$650,000 to support individuals who live independently with supports through Housing First, which is exciting.

Yukon's seniors supplement is a demand-based program, and it requires an additional \$250,000 to operate.

There is also a request for \$300,000 to meet the needs of Yukoners with disabilities. This includes two staff members and increased funding to support the increased client demand and to provide better service to those folks.

Lastly, there is a \$515,000 request to support the implementation of the midwifery program.

There is also an increase of \$10.7 million in our COVID-19 response. It is important to note that we continue to be in a public health emergency and now in a state of emergency under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*.

The surge, beginning in June 2021, along with the forecasted cost to the end of this fiscal year contributed to this increase. This includes an increase, as we have mentioned previously, of 87.3 FTEs. Some of the highlights include: \$8.9 million to support public health measures such as infection control, screening, and additional supports for the hospital; \$256,000 for social supports for vulnerable people; and \$1.5 million to support vacations and services for workers.

The FTEs include temporary staff to support the vaccine deployment, testing and surveillance, social supports, mental health supports, infection prevention, screening, and other services. In order to adequately support the COVID-19 response, Health and Social Services requires staff to respond and meet the needs of Yukoners. While we did temporarily bring people in from other jurisdictions during the summer to help with the outbreak, the increase of FTEs noted is for staff primarily from the Yukon.

There is a total capital increase of \$5.8 million. The highlights are: \$3.8 million is for IHealth, which is partially

recoverable; and there is \$1.7 million to finish the much-needed renovations at Copper Ridge Place. I want to just mention that the Copper Ridge refurbishment program was originally budgeted for one year, which was 2020-21, but it wasn't completed, so the project is expected to be finished in the 2021-22 fiscal year. The total cost of that project has not changed. I said that it is \$1.7 million, but it's \$1.668 million. Important changes also that I had the opportunity to speak about are to provide services to our seniors in long-term care.

I would just like to review the COVID response supplementary budget. The COVID-19 response — and this is the O&M budget — in the first supplementary budget for 2021-22 is \$25 million — just under that. This is an increase of \$10.7 million over the 2021-22 main estimates for COVID-19 response.

At the highest level for accounting purposes, these funds are grouped into three distinct areas. They cover personnel costs, some other costs, and government transfers. This funding supports both the vaccine rollout and the COVID-19 initiatives, which I think is incredibly important for Yukoners to understand. We have all taken the position — and by “all”, I am sure all members of this Legislative Assembly and Yukoners — that we have to respond in the best way possible. Vaccines are our best defence against COVID-19 and will likely remain that way for the foreseeable future, if not many years to come. We should spare no cost in making sure that we have those vaccines readily available for Yukoners and can provide them to them through the vaccine rollouts, both here in Whitehorse and through community health centres — incredibly important. One hundred percent of the \$10.7 million being asked for — for the COVID response in this supplementary budget — is recoverable from the federal government. This fully recoverable funding from the federal government is specific to providing support in the areas of continuing care, voluntary self-isolation, immunization partnerships, and data management.

For personnel costs, there is an increase of \$7.4 million to support staff working across the Yukon Territory and their COVID-19 response in areas such as: vaccinations, self-isolation facilities, infection prevention and control in long-term care homes, communications, information technology, and other front-line supports. We heard a little bit today in a ministerial statement about how important things like the development of the app are for businesses here in the territory, as well as the ability for individuals to download their own QR codes and support their ability to participate in functions and activities here in the territory in a way that is convenient for them.

For other COVID-19-related costs, there is an increase of \$3.3 million to continue managing COVID-19, including by providing self-isolation supports and services. Of course, those have all been provided to Yukoners free of cost to them — but certainly a cost to the government. That includes individuals who don't have other places in which they can self-isolate or their family circumstances are such that self-isolating in the home where they live is not possible — other family members

are affected or other folks who have to continue to go to work or to school — those kinds of things.

To be clear — and maybe it's coming again at Christmas or in the spring of this year — we provided service for a great number of university students who needed to come home during that time in which you needed to self-isolate for 14 days. They would come home, but it wouldn't be possible for them to go to their parent's home or to their family home or wherever they were living, and they spent two full weeks in self-isolation facilities. We were pleased to be able to provide that service for Yukoners. That costs money, and it was incredibly important that we provided that service and we will continue — hopefully not having to do 14 days of self-isolation again, but, of course, there are still individuals who must self-isolate if they test positive, and so we're continuing to provide that service in less volume at this point.

That \$3.3 million includes, as I've noted, the self-isolation supports, ensuring barrier-free access to COVID-19 vaccine in Whitehorse and in communities, maintaining infection prevention and control in long-term care homes and in hospitals, and managing data and communications.

The \$10.7 million, as I've noted, was recoverable. It allowed us to increase — supportive of the three pillars that are outlined in *Forging Ahead: The Yukon's Continuing Response to COVID-19*; that's our response document.

A total of \$8.9 million is under the public health measures pillar. This funding includes additional staff in Continuing Care to ensure health and safety of long-term care residents, visitors, and staff, as well as to maintain the self-isolation sites, as I've said.

And \$256,000 comes under the social supports for vulnerable people pillar from *Forging Ahead*. The social services pillar includes funding for support workers and social workers to provide enhanced support to Yukon's most vulnerable at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter.

\$1.5 million is under the vaccination pillar, and this is funding for staff. It may seem obvious, but it may not be obvious to all Yukoners how complicated — and how dedicated the folks are who are working at the vaccination centre here in Whitehorse and actually in health centres across the territory and how this is, of course, in addition to their regular duties and in addition to the services that Health and Social Services provides otherwise.

The funding is for staff who are providing technical expertise for the ongoing maintenance of Yukon's vaccine booking system and who are working to develop Yukon's proof of vaccination credential or have done so to ensure that it aligns with federal requirements.

Additionally, the funding is being used for the call centre to address Yukoners' COVID- and vaccine-related questions and concerns. They continue to be coming in — a regular amount of calls. I truly want to note how important this is as a service for Yukoners. I think that there were some motions noted earlier today that asked about individuals and those who can't necessarily access a computer. This important telephone line allows individuals to have their questions answered, in addition to some of the alternative vaccines, for instance. We

have published a phone number where people can leave their name and number and someone will phone them back with an appointment and talk to them about the options. All of this is so incredibly important for Yukoners, because not everyone has access to a computer or to the Internet or the skills maybe to do that, but there are places to get help.

We have continued to publish this number and have individuals answer the calls to provide various kinds of information to Yukoners and answer all their questions. These are uncertain times, and it will continue to be that way, no matter how we manage to develop some tolerance for COVID-19 and for the changes that it has brought to our lives. I think that it will continue to be an uncertain time, and it will continue to be a time in which government and Members of the Legislative Assembly will need to respond to their constituents in a way that is meaningful.

I think that the last comments that I would like to make — I remember that there were some questions regarding the Yukon Hospital Corporation and requests for information from members opposite. It might be helpful for Yukoners to know that the Yukon hospital services' O&M budget in the first supplementary budget for 2021-22 is \$85.8 million. This is an increase of \$206,000 over the 2021-22 main estimates. The increase of \$206,000 to the Yukon Hospital Corporation is to cover the interest payments on a letter of credit used by the Yukon Hospital Corporation to meet its pension solvency needs. Our government recognizes the importance of that and the opportunity to assist them through that payment. I note that there will no doubt be some more questions regarding the Yukon Hospital Corporation. Of course, they were here answering questions for members, so I appreciate the opportunity to review those few things before I answer more questions.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you to the minister for her comments there and for welcoming her officials. I have a few fairly brief questions that I would like to ask of the minister with regards to the implementation of *Putting People First*. Obviously, one of the issues that we hear a lot about as MLAs relates to when Yukoners are required to travel outside the territory for medical reasons. I noticed some commitments made in *Putting People First* to that end.

I will start with the establishment of a single unit responsible for case management, implementing decisions on medevac or commercial flights, decisions on escorts liaising with home and out-of-territory clinicians, medical facilities, hotels, and people's families. That was the commitment in *Putting People First*, and I was wondering if the minister could provide us a brief update on where we're at with the establishment of a single unit.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. The government has expanded the in-territory programs to ensure that more Yukoners can access care closer to home. This is medical travel and care coordination. When Yukoners need to travel outside of their home community to receive medical services, the travel for medical treatment program is available.

As part of the implementation of *Putting People First*, as noted in the question, the report — as informed by medical

travel — a program review. We have already doubled the medical travel subsidy and will be indexing it to inflation starting in 2022. We introduced a subsidy for patients and for escorts — that was not available before — on the first day of travel — it used to be the second day, so that has increased as well — and clarified the medical escort policy.

We removed restrictions about medical travel destinations. It used to be primarily Vancouver. Now I think that it's Edmonton, and Calgary is available as an option. There may be treatment that is either more convenient for people to have in those locations or the medical decisions might clarify where somebody should go for the special treatment.

We have introduced drop boxes to submit medical travel forms and receipts in both Whitehorse General Hospital and at the airport, which is more convenient for individuals. Those documents are collected there, rather than having to mail them in, scan them, and send them in or drop them off at the medical travel office. We are connecting Yukoners to person-centred medical travel through the creation of a care and coordination medical travel unit to provide wraparound supports to medical travellers, including those who receive coverage through the non-insured health benefits, which is through Canada.

I can also indicate the importance of this particular coordination unit. We all have anecdotal stories or know individuals who have come to us with concerns. In drastic cases, we might have someone who went somewhere for medical travel and is then released from the hospital on a weekend and not able to connect to medical travel folks to get their flight back. We have all heard horror stories like that. We've had people who may not have the funds to be staying in a location other than that or for some reason the medical travel return wasn't coordinated. That can happen on a more regular basis than we like, so the care and coordination medical travel unit focus will be to provide wraparound supports to medical travellers. We have designed this to address those concerns.

This unit will deliver more coordinated care services to Yukoners and identify and address gaps, such as the example that I have just given, for both in-territory and out-of-territory discharge processes. This is probably not the only issue but is probably the primary one.

Staff have been hired for this unit, and it is forming. We removed the names of specific cities in the regulations so that patients can go to more than one hospital. I mentioned Vancouver, Edmonton, and Calgary, but in the event that the medical treatment that someone needs is at a different location, they are not being hampered by the wording of the regulation.

We are planning to be part of a new project this spring that will work with the British Columbia health authorities on improved transitions of care for Yukoners returning from medical travel who are in British Columbia, and that is an incredibly important option and development, I would say.

Work is also underway to increase the use of virtual care alternatives to conduct research into how to address travel-related barriers for lower income Yukoners, to evaluate the medevac program, and to study the feasibility of establishing medical travel residences in Whitehorse and perhaps other cities.

To continue delivering medical travel enhancements, the rural zone subsidy for residents of the Whitehorse periphery — so, zones 1 and 2 have been developed around the City of Whitehorse — has been discontinued, as per the recommendation in *Putting People First*. But, as we further implement the *Putting People First* report, medical travel recommendations that we are continuing to consult on with our partners — our Yukon First Nation governments and Yukoners who have previously accessed the program — this includes exploring options for delivering a safe and alternative driving service to support Yukoners to travel to Whitehorse to access care, because that is not something that is always available to people. For those who might be listening and who are wondering about this work — and the continued work that will be done in relation to *Putting People First*, the recommendation about medical travel, and the improvement of the subsidies and other services — I am happy to report that this has begun and, I would say, is well down that road — is recommendation 8.4 in *Putting People First*.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's answers there. There was a lot of information. I would like to just parse into a bit of it. She noted that the — and I stand to be corrected on the name of the unit, but I believe I heard “care and coordination unit” as the unit that I was referencing. I believe that the minister indicated that it is “forming”.

Can I just ask what status it is at today? Is it going to be established completely within the year, or where are we approximately with the establishment of that unit?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the re-forming of the question because I didn't specifically note that in the last answer. The medical travel care and coordination unit will consist of four people.

Two of those individuals have already been hired. The others we are planning to hire early in the new year, and then the unit will be complete and starting their work.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's clarity on that. I would note that it is very positive to see the development of that unit.

The minister also referenced the recommendation in *Putting People First* to review the medical travel regulations. She did indicate that this had been done, I believe. I just wanted to ask if she could clarify if the regulations have already been amended, and if so, which cities were added to that? With that, I will let her answer.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The regulations have been amended with respect to the changes that I have noted regarding medical travel. I can also indicate that the cities have been removed from the regulations so that the regulation isn't hampered by maybe an opportunity for someone to go to a city that wouldn't be named.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the answer from the minister — very helpful.

The minister also referenced a program that sounded like a partnership with the Government of British Columbia. She referenced a British Columbia program to address medical travellers from the Yukon who had travelled to BC. Could I ask the minister to explain that a little bit more and give us a bit of

a sense of what that looks like? In particular, I am wondering if it relates to the other recommendation in *Putting People First*, which was to create residences in Whitehorse and Vancouver to reduce the need for hotel accommodations for medical travellers. Perhaps she can explain that a little bit more.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: This is a new development in that we were approached quite recently by the British Columbia government. The information I have so far is that it is a newly funded program through the federal government and that British Columbia has reached out to determine if we could work together. The project is not likely to start before the spring of 2022, but the focus will be on improving transitions for Yukoners who are coming out of care who have gone to British Columbia, had care in their medical system, and then are transitioning out of that system and returning back from British Columbia to the Yukon.

It is quite separate from the reference in *Putting People First* to residences for folks to stay in, which, of course, is another really important part, not only for the Yukon government and the costs associated with individuals to stay when they are receiving medical care in another jurisdiction, but that it also includes the care when folks travel to Whitehorse for that kind of service.

I will just note that, in relation to some residences that Yukon Housing Corporation did some initial investigation on — and that work is ongoing — in relation to the recommendation in *Putting People First* that deals with that, but that is different from the project in British Columbia.

I will note lastly that the project with British Columbia is a really important one for the new medical travel care and coordination unit to focus on. I think the timing will align well when they come up to speed and when there is an opportunity to work with BC.

Mr. Dixon: I thank the minister for that answer. It sounds like this relatively new development is something that we will probably learn about more as the months carry on and as the implementation of the new unit becomes established.

The minister, however, did indicate that the program that she was talking about there was not in direct relation to the recommendation in *Putting People First*, which reads as follows: “Create residences in Whitehorse and Vancouver to reduce the need for hotel accommodations for medical travellers...” It goes on after that.

Can the minister provide us an update on where that particular recommendation is, and what work has been done to date to look at the development of residences, both in Whitehorse and Vancouver?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thanks for the question. I think 2.6, involving the exploration of residences in both Whitehorse and Vancouver, is an exciting opportunity. As the member opposite will know, it's certainly an exciting opportunity for the Department of Health and Social Services, and government-wide, to have some perhaps more predictable costs in relation to this.

In *Putting People First*, they speak about some predictability of costs for medical travel, but also some opportunity for Yukoners to have a safe, known place and not

have the uncertainty of whether you're going to stay in a hotel or what that hotel will be or if you can find a place or the stress of all of that. We know that is an important part of medical travel. We know that the new unit will focus on helping folks with those wraparound services as well.

As I've noted, there has been some early work by Yukon Housing with respect to considering a Whitehorse location. I know that HPW has been having some early conversations with Health and Social Services and Yukon Housing to determine how we can meet this recommendation. I also know that there is some exploration with other partners. I have had conversations with some Yukon First Nation leaders who are interested in this concept for providing this kind of service, whether that would be broader or more specific to their First Nation. It is still early days for those kinds of conversations, but there are exciting opportunities all around.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that, and I appreciate the minister's answer.

I can understand that Yukon Housing would be the logical body to look at the purchase of a property, or a creation of a residence, here in Whitehorse, but I'm not sure that Yukon Housing is able to reach beyond the territory's borders. I was wondering if the minister could give some indication of what work has been done to look beyond and in particular at the Vancouver residence, given that was the specific city that was referenced in 2.6.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Sorry, we have certainly not gone down the road of considering real estate or even conceptually determining: Is Vancouver the right place? It likely is; that is the recommendation. We certainly have most of our medical travel go to British Columbia, but there are other places in British Columbia now that provide medical services, as well as Vancouver, whether that is Victoria or other smaller centres.

I can indicate that there have been very early conversations. Yukon Housing is the focus for Whitehorse in order to meet that recommendation from *Putting People First*, and the broader conversations will have to also take place. We are focusing on having the unit stand up. We have made early success on medical travel achievements and changes — positive changes — based on the changes to regulations so far, and this will be the next step in determining how to implement what has been recommended.

The note I have is something that I wasn't aware of, and it is great to know this, because this is really an exercise in looking down the road. I think that it is important that we know the lay of the land. The note I have is that there is information that St. Paul's Hospital — and the member opposite may be aware of this — is planning to move in a number of years to another part of Vancouver. We will, of course, work with Highways and Public Works on a possible Vancouver site residence, but the vast majority — I wouldn't say vast majority — but lots of Yukoners go to St. Paul's. It is the cardiac centre for the western part of Canada — it is critical — and Yukoners have amazing service at St. Paul's. If St. Paul's were going to move locations, it would obviously inform where we might be looking to have a residence. Of course, it should be near the hospital.

I also am well aware, although it has been a few years, that the BC Children's Hospital is a critical location for individuals who travel from here for children's care. I know how successful and great a service is provided by the Ronald McDonald House for families near the BC Children's Hospital, but we will need to consider all of those things: the locations of where Yukoners get their care and those places that will be convenient for Yukoners to stay.

Lastly, I should mention the incredible service that Yukoners get from the BC Cancer Clinic, which, of course, is close to Vancouver General — whether there would need to be one conveniently located residence or some smaller places for individuals to stay or how many rooms or a small residence and how many people could stay there or whether people would have to be otherwise in hotels and those kinds of things. It is sort of right-sizing all of that. They are all important conversations — none of the details of which we have met yet.

Mr. Dixon: Just so I am clear, are we thinking that we wouldn't take any action until the new St. Paul's Hospital is open? I understand that it could be as early as 2026, but obviously that is a number of years away. I just want to double-check. Is the minister contemplating the purchase of a unit of buildings or a number of units in a building? Or would they be looking at something different — maybe buying the rights to a certain number of hotel rooms or something like that or partnering with an NGO that may offer those services otherwise? What are the options that are being looked at right now?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would certainly hope that we can move before the St. Paul's move, but it is certainly something that needs to be taken into account. If all of a sudden St. Paul's was out near UBC or something, then we would need to make sure that there was some consideration of that. Even though the move won't likely happen, the location for St. Paul's will likely be chosen before then — none of which is to say that we are hanging our hats on that only. I don't have any information about whether it would be purchased, leased, a block of hotel rooms — those kinds of things. It might be an evolution that starts with one and moves into another. I would say that all options are on the table. We are looking for great ideas to respond to to make sure that Yukoners are feeling safe, at home, and comfortable when they have to travel for medical services.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that. The reason I am asking is that the recommendation in *Putting People First* sort of stood out to me and a few others just because it sort of contemplates the Yukon government owning an asset outside of the territory. I think that this is relatively unusual for a government to do. I was just wondering what sort of considerations were being looked at to allow for that, because it would be unusual for the government to own a piece of real estate or a building outside the territory. That's what I was asking. It sounds like the minister hasn't arrived at a conclusion there.

Perhaps she could tell us if there have been any meetings to date or any sort of discussions with different groups in the Vancouver area that may offer this type of housing already and whether or not she or the department has had any meetings to that end.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Good questions, all of them — I now have more information about St. Paul's moving. I clearly need to read more Vancouver newspapers — information that St. Paul's, at least initially, is looking to move near what's known as Science World in Vancouver — or the former Olympic Village. I think that there is some property being looked at there. That will be an important piece of information as they make those determinations.

All options are open with respect to how we might go down this road. I think that the exploration of partnerships in this work is incredibly important, whether that would be a private industry partner, First Nation governments, or other partners who might be interested in this project as well. It's not completely unheard of, although the Yukon government doesn't own too many assets outside of the territory. The Northwest Territories does either own or lease a residence in Edmonton for their citizens, and I think that Nunavut has something. Again, we will be exploring how they developed this and how they went down that road — whether, as I said, it was incremental or some other version. Sorry, Nunavut has a relationship and some places for people to stay in Ottawa.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's answer. The last piece that I wanted to touch on was her comment from a few responses ago where she said that she had several conversations with a number of First Nation leaders about the possibility of establishing a First Nation-specific program or First Nation-specific unit. I just wanted to know if she could explain that a little bit more.

Would that be a specific residence that would be geared towards First Nation citizens specifically or a partnership with a First Nation government to pursue some sort of accommodations outside of the territory?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I realize that I didn't answer the member opposite's question earlier about whether we have been having sort of formal meetings about this. I have not been involved in any formal meetings where this was the topic or an agenda item. I know that the deputy has not either, but *Putting People First* has been out for over a year now. I won't speak for Yukon First Nations or their development corporations, but there have been long conversations — even before *Putting People First* — about having some sort of place for folks to stay — just conversations around the concept of: What if, in Whitehorse, we had a place for people to stay so they wouldn't all have to be in hotels? — and those kinds of very general conversations.

I know that there have been those expressions over the years. I wouldn't say that they are in response to this particular recommendation, but we are excited to go down that road. All options are open.

Mr. Cathers: In the limited time that we have left, I am just going to briefly touch on a couple of topics.

The first is that, as the minister knows, I wrote to her on October 21 in support of a constituent being able to access the Pfizer vaccine and also suggesting that this may be made available to every Yukoner who wished to have that opportunity. Unfortunately, there seems to have been a real lack of urgency in the minister's response to me. It took over a

month for the response. I received that response, then, at 2:47 p.m. on Friday. I will table it once I have finished referring to it.

The response thanked me for my letter sent on October 21 and then went on to basically deny the request, stating that "The Moderna vaccine is safe and effective and at this time, the only option for adults in the Yukon. I do however, recommend you let your constituent know to contact their Health Care Provider who will then contact our Immunizations Program to discuss how and if it is possible to proceed with an alternative mRNA COVID-19 vaccine like Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty."

Then strangely, about three hours later, the Department of Health and Social Services posted the opposite of what the minister had indicated on Facebook, indicating — and I will quote from this post, which is still on the department's Facebook page: "A limited supply of Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) vaccine is available for people seeking an alternative to mRNA vaccines.

"Additionally, the Pfizer vaccine was initially available to those aged 12-17. This vaccine is now being offered to adults 18 and older in order to provide an alternative to Moderna." Then it goes on to talk about vaccine availability.

So, Deputy Chair, it seems rather strange that the minister, while promoting that Yukoners should get vaccines, takes over a month to respond to a request for a Yukoner who wanted to receive the Pfizer vaccine, then basically almost declines the offer, indicating that the individual would need to consult with their health provider and try to get an exemption instead of simply having Pfizer made available to them on request. Then, three hours and two minutes later, the minister's department says that vaccines are being made available widely and — of the Pfizer — to anyone who wishes it, as well as the Janssen, which has commonly been referred to in media as "Johnson & Johnson". So, it really does raise the question of whether the minister is unaware of what her department is doing in this area and, if not, why she would respond in the way she did.

Deputy Chair, I understand that, in keeping with the practice of the need for sanitization, et cetera, to allow the witnesses to arrive who are coming here at 3:30 p.m., seeing the time, I remove that you report progress.

Deputy Chair: It is moved by the Member for Lake Laberge that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Deputy Chair: Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 5 adopted earlier today, Committee of the Whole will receive witnesses from the office of the chief medical officer of health.

In order to allow the witnesses time to take their place in the Chamber, the Committee will now recess and reconvene at 3:30 p.m.

Recess

Chair (Ms. Blake): Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Appearance of witnesses

Chair: Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 5 adopted on this day, Committee of the Whole will now receive witnesses from the office of the chief medical officer of health.

I would ask all members to remember to refer their remarks through the Chair when addressing the witnesses, and I would also ask the witnesses to refer their answers through the Chair when they are responding to the members of the Committee.

Member for Riverdale South, I believe that you will introduce the witnesses.

Witnesses introduced

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to welcome the witnesses who are appearing today before our Committee of the Whole. They are Dr. André Corriveau, the acting chief medical officer of health, and Dr. Jesse Kancir, the medical officer of health. Thank you both for being here today. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly, and I know that my colleagues will have many interesting questions for you.

Chair: Would the witnesses like to make brief opening remarks?

Dr. Corriveau: Thank you, minister, Members of the Legislative Assembly, and all Yukoners for the opportunity to speak today about the work of the office of the chief medical officer of health, in particular in relation to COVID-19.

I look forward to answering questions about our office's approach to public health, COVID-19 and its variants, COVID-19 vaccinations, the spread of COVID-19 in recent weeks, and expectations for the weeks ahead, as well as the impacts of recent circuit-breaker public health measures.

The chief medical officer of health is appointed by the Commissioner in Executive Council and is directly accountable to the minister and the deputy minister. The chief medical officer of health's duties are established under the *Public Health and Safety Act* and include monitoring, investigating, responding to, and preventing the transmission of a communicable disease.

The *Public Health and Safety Act* also provides the chief medical officer of health with certain duties and responsibilities, including the authority to designate and revoke the designation of a communicable disease and the ability to declare a public health emergency. This was last done in relation to COVID-19 on March 18, 2020.

Following the declaration of a public health emergency, the chief medical officer of health also has the power to compel a person to provide information needed to exercise his or her duties; order a person to suspend sales, distribution, or relocation of medication, supplies, and equipment that may be required; enter a place or vehicle to determine the health of a person or peoples, which includes by examining a person and directing them to undergo testing; direct the disinfection of a place or a vehicle; and to detain, appropriately isolate, and hospitalize a person, if necessary, until the communicable disease threat is no longer a concern.

Over the past summer, the Yukon experienced its first official wave of COVID-19. In early November, we began to

experience the Yukon's second significant wave, which has been largely driven by the Delta variant that had already affected most other provinces and territories earlier in the summer and early fall.

Our office's response to the November 2 wave of COVID-19 has been evidence-based and science-informed and draws upon the knowledge, expertise, and experience of professionals, experts, academic research, and medical officers of health from across Canada and the world.

In particular, I would like to mention that this office works very closely with the BC Centre for Disease Control, which is also, for us, a source of significant expertise and support.

We are observing signs that the circuit-breaker measures that were introduced on November 13 are having an impact, as the daily increase in cases starts to decline in Whitehorse and in the communities. While this is a positive sign, it is important that we do not let our guard down.

The number of active cases in the Yukon, as of this morning, was 69, which remains high, and it continues to have an impact on our fragile health care system, although it's important to note that the most severe outcomes this time around were mitigated by the relatively high immunization rates that had already been achieved in the Yukon prior to the start of this wave.

Although the weeks leading up to the end-of-the-year holiday season remain a high-risk period, we have seen that public health measures and COVID-19 vaccinations are an effective tool at our disposal to limit the spread of disease, reduce the severity of disease, and keep our communities safe.

We know that all Yukoners, including children, have experienced disruptions due to COVID-19 and its unintended impacts, such as on mental health, education, physical activity, social lives, and overall health. Vaccinations help to alleviate these disruptions.

The arrival of a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine for children five to 11 is a significant milestone in the ongoing response to COVID-19 and a welcome development, as we enter this holiday season. It will no doubt contribute to added protection for all Yukoners.

In the weeks and months ahead, and as we continue to learn how to live with COVID-19, we know there will be challenges. Everyone is concerned about the emergency —

Chair: Order. Sorry, your five minutes have come.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I would like to thank the witnesses for appearing here today.

I would like to start by asking about the pediatric vaccine. I know it was welcome news for a lot of parents that the pediatric vaccine was granted approval in Canada, and many parents have already begun booking appointments. However, we anticipate that there could be some increased hesitancy when it comes to vaccinating young children. As the doctors will likely be aware, polling done at a national level does indicate that is the case, at least generally within Canada.

My question is: What steps are being taken to provide information and resources to answer questions that parents might have and to provide them with the appropriate

information regarding the pediatric vaccine's safety and efficacy?

Dr. Corriveau: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair, for the question. I think that this is a very important point. As a matter of fact, in our recommendations to the department and the minister with regard to implementing the vaccine for ages five to 11, we wanted to make sure that they would use a very separate stream where there is more time allocated to answer questions from parents. There is only general information available through the website. There are many associations, like the Canadian Paediatric Society, that have produced information, materials, and questions and answers. We also understand that it will be important to provide additional opportunities and a slower pace so that the appointments are scheduled at larger intervals to take that last opportunity to answer questions from parents and put the children at ease to receive their vaccine.

Mr. Cathers: My next question is: We noticed that there is a discrepancy between Transport Canada's proof of vaccination requirements for travel and the plans here in the Yukon. For Transport Canada, the proof of vaccination requirement starts at 12 years old plus four months. Here in the Yukon, the requirement starts right here at 12 years. The additional four months would allow a 12-year-old to get both shots, plus the two weeks post-final shot for being considered to be fully immune, without having to miss out on things like sports or public facilities. This is a request that has come forward from parents.

Will the office of the chief medical officer of health consider revising the advice for the proof of vaccination from the current 12 years old to 12 years old plus four months?

Dr. Corriveau: Yes, thank you for the question. This issue was flagged to my attention, actually — yes, it has been at least a couple of weeks now. We are onto this. There will be some adjustments made so that there will be no disruptions for kids, in terms of activities and other features. It is going to be addressed.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, I appreciate that answer and the information.

With regard to the state of emergency, we understand that the government's most recent declaration of a state of emergency was based on the advice from the acting chief medical officer of health. At that time, we had seen a surge of new cases, especially in Whitehorse, with at the highest, seeing, I believe it was, 80 new cases over a three-day period. Dr. Elliott, as acting chief medical officer of health, had indicated she was hopeful that the state of emergency would end on December 3. As Dr. Corriveau noted, we have seen the number of new cases drop significantly since the introduction of the state of emergency, so I would just ask for an update at this point from the acting chief medical officer of health. Do you believe that we are on track for the Yukon to lift the state of emergency on December 3, as was hoped? What level of new cases would you like to be seeing to allow that to happen, and are there other metrics that you would be looking to, as well, in considering whether to recommend lifting the state of emergency or extending it?

Dr. Corriveau: In terms of the metrics, we are obviously looking at the number of new cases, but I think the most important thing for the territory, given the fragility of our health care system, is what the impact will be in terms of the demand on services, whether it's at the hospital or in the health centres. We know that the holiday season is also a high-risk period because of the level of interactions between people, the increase in travel, and the fact that many of our health care facilities would be operating with minimal staff because of holidays and other things.

We are taking all of these into consideration, and my recommendations have been put forward, and they will be reviewed, and decisions will be made. As I said in my introductory statement, I think the Yukon was in a good place when the wave hit, because we had already achieved some higher levels of immunization than other jurisdictions. Being able to now introduce vaccines to five- to 11-year-olds is going to put us in an even better place in the coming weeks, but we still have a period where things will be fragile, so I think we are going to have to act with some degree of caution, in terms of how we relax things.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answer from Dr. Corriveau. The witness made reference to having provided recommendations to government regarding that. Can you provide us with any information and elaborate on what the key elements of those recommendations would be?

Dr. Corriveau: I would submit that my recommendations go to the minister, to whom I am accountable. I would rely on the minister to decide when and what she will be sharing in terms of those recommendations.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate that Dr. Corriveau is limited in what he can share without permission from the minister. I would just put the request in to the minister that, in the interest of information sharing, we would like to see what those recommendations contain. It is difficult for us, as the Official Opposition, to be fully informed if we don't see the details of the recommendations coming from the office of the chief medical officer of health or even the key details thereof.

I am going to move on to another area, recognizing that the witnesses are limited in what they are allowed to provide us. Is it the advice of the office of the chief medical officer of health that the vaccine mandate and vaccine verification system, referred to by many as the "vaccine passport system", be something that is intended to be permanent throughout the period of the pandemic, or would this be lifted at some point in the future as some provinces have announced?

Dr. Corriveau: Yes, Madam Chair. I think that we are all hoping that it is going to be a temporary measure. I think that it is too early to tell. We are just hearing right now about a new variant, the Omicron variant, that is just starting to circulate around the world. This virus still has a lot of surprises, but we are all hoping that this will be a temporary part of our human history with Canada — or within the Yukon — in terms of the vaccine mandates in particular and proof of vaccination, but I am certainly not in a position right now to give you a timeline or even a guesstimate of when that might occur.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the response. I would ask two questions. One is whether the acting chief medical officer of health anticipates that verification for the receipt of the booster shot will be required at some point, and the second question is regarding boosters for people under the age of 50, outside the identified categories such as health care workers and those with immune conditions requiring it.

As the doctors will both be aware, I'm sure, there are some Canadian jurisdictions that have either made booster shots available to those aged 18 and up now or have announced a timeline for that. Could you just elaborate on your thoughts both about the potential for requiring verification for the booster at some point and the availability of booster shots for people under the age of 50?

Dr. Corriveau: So, Madam Chair, I'll respond to the second question first. With regard to the availability of booster shots, I think that the scientific consensus now is that waning immunity from the initial two doses is a reality. It starts to manifest itself, generally speaking, after six months, although it looks like younger people and people who have received the vaccine at a longer interval may maintain the neutralizing antibodies for a longer period of time. I think that everybody is going to require a booster shot in the near future. We also have to prioritize with regard to people who still require a first and second dose and people at high risk whose booster was more urgent. This is how the Yukon has proceeded, along with others. Based on capacity, I would expect that, soon after children have received their initial vaccination, there will be a greater availability and we would be able to open access to the booster shot to everybody over the age of 18.

Mr. Cathers: Now, my next question for the witnesses is — there are a number of notable differences between the Yukon and other jurisdictions with regard to the vaccination verification system. The government, as well as the acting CMOH, has indicated that largely the list in the Yukon is based on British Columbia's list of places. There are, however, some differences between them that have been brought to our attention by Yukoners. This includes churches, hair salons, and barbershops.

In the list of designated settings, BC does not require, according to my understanding, proof of vaccination to go into a hair salon or a barbershop, but this is required in the Yukon. Additionally, a number of local churches have written a joint letter asking about in-person faith gatherings. It appears that the Yukon is an outlier in not allowing in-person worship for people without requiring them to provide proof of vaccination.

From reading BC's list, it appears that there is a limit on the size of certain organized events, such as funerals, but that worship services are classified as an essential service. We have heard a lot of questions from Yukoners concerned about those differences between our rules and British Columbia's. While we do understand that there might be reasons behind the Yukon-specific considerations, since the list is largely based on British Columbia's, we do wonder why churches, hair salons, and barber shops are being dealt with differently here than in BC. I would just ask if the witnesses could just elaborate on those differences between the Yukon's rules and British

Columbia's in particular and also indicate whether they are in the process of reconsidering that to potentially change that to align with British Columbia's rules around those places.

Dr. Corriveau: This is a very good question. We would like to say that those extra-stringent measures were put in place as part of the circuit-breaker measures that we imposed as of November 13 until December 3. The thinking was that we needed to stop transmission by all possible means by not making exemptions, but these are the types of measures that are to be considered for relaxation after the circuit-breaker period is over, so those things are certainly on the table.

Mr. Cathers: I do thank Dr. Corriveau for that indication. As I am sure he is aware, for some people of faith — of course, for Jewish people, Hanukkah has just begun, and Christmas is a very important time of year for people who are of the Christian faith. I would just hope that this would be given consideration as well when that is being considered.

I want to move on to the topic of schools. Like many Yukoners and Canadians, we have been watching the development of scientific information and the discussion about COVID develop. One of the biggest changes has been the understanding of how a virus travels. Of course, in the beginning, there was the indication that it was thought to be largely due to droplet transmission instead of aerosol transmission. Now the information is increasingly indicating that aerosol spread is occurring and that increased attention is needed to proper ventilation systems.

So, I would ask what advice the office of the chief medical officer of health has provided to the Department of Education about ventilation systems in schools. Does the acting CMOH feel that what is in place now is adequate? We understand that some classrooms in some schools have HEPA filters, but they don't seem to be everywhere, and we have heard concerns expressed about the ventilation systems.

Dr. Corriveau: I would like to ask my colleague, Dr. Kancir, to respond to this question since he has been more involved in the school setting than I have since I have been here, only two weeks ago.

Dr. Kancir: Prior to the beginning of the school year, the consideration about how COVID might travel in classrooms was a question that we explored with the Department of Education, and my understanding is that the Department of Education undertook some work to increase ventilation in classrooms with this in mind. I think that one of the best indications about risk in the classroom is what we see with disease transmission right now, in that it is essentially non-existent. We are not seeing the spread of COVID-19 in classrooms right now, which would tell me that the measures that we have in class and the measures that we have increased, including the mask mandate, seem to be protecting children from transmission in classrooms right now.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answer from Dr. Kancir. He touched on, in his response, another thing that we do get a lot of questions from parents about, and that is about mask use in classrooms. The younger the students, the more difficult it has been to enforce mask use, and we have also heard from a number of parents who are quite upset about the rule.

I do understand that the intention, of course, is to protect public health, but can either of the witnesses talk about their advice with regard to mask use in school, and at what point will the CMOH look to be advising that this measure could be removed and/or modified, particularly as it pertains to younger children?

Dr. Kancir: The recommendation for mask use in classrooms is something that we introduced this past month with the increase in cases in classrooms. Certainly, our hope is that, as we see an increase in uptake of vaccines, masks will change as those vaccine rates increase. Exactly when that will happen, time will tell, but we know that mask use is a very effective way to protect children in classrooms and in schools. So, for the time being, it is an effective measure to protect the children.

Mr. Cathers: We have noticed that the advice provided to parents, when there is a confirmed case in a school or an exposure in a classroom setting, has changed over time.

I have copies of letters here from Yukon Communicable Disease Control sent to parents, guardians, and staff of, in both cases, École Whitehorse Elementary School.

On November 17, a letter was sent to parents that advised, and I quote: “All others not fully immunized are recommended to self-isolate until November 19th, inclusive, and self-monitor for symptoms through November 23rd.”

Then on November 20, a letter sent to parents indicated, and I quote: “All others not fully immunized or who have not recovered from lab-confirmed COVID-19 infection in the past 90 days are recommended to self-isolate until November 27th, inclusive, and self-monitor for symptoms through December 1st.”

The notable change between those, of course, is that the second letter did not make any mention of someone who had previously contracted COVID-19, and the second one made reference to a lab-confirmed COVID-19 infection in the past 90 days being a reason why someone would not need to self-isolate.

Can the witnesses provide us any information about this change? It appears that, at some point, the department was providing advice for people who were recently infected but have now recovered. Is this due to natural immunity, and why has the change occurred in the advice between these two letters within a fairly short period of time?

Dr. Kancir: The difference in the letters was an exercise we took with YCDC to clarify some of our recommendations to parents and to teachers in the letter. That was a bundle of changes that we included. There were a few wording changes that we thought would be helpful to parents and to teachers to better understand guidance. That piece of advice specifically has always been how we practise our recommended changes. It is just now included in the letter.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate that information. I am going to move on at this point to some other questions related to the vaccine mandate. We have seen a variety of measures taken around the country to address circumstances in each jurisdiction. For instance, several jurisdictions have announced a mandate that applied broadly either to government employees

or, in the case of Québec, announcing it for some in the health sector that they then backed away from.

As noted, some jurisdictions have backed away from imposing the mandate on certain professions after announcing it. Others have gotten creative with accommodations. In the Northwest Territories, they have provided some alternatives for employees other than proof of vaccination. According to an article from, I believe it was, Cabin Radio in the NWT, the Finance minister, who is responsible for human resources, said that being overly strict with the policy they had originally announced would have left some communities without enough workers. My understanding is that the NWT is allowing staff to have either proof of vaccination or submit to mandatory wearing of personal protective equipment and testing.

I would just also note that — actually, I’ll just wrap up there and just ask if the witnesses could indicate whether they are considering modifying the Yukon’s vaccine mandate — recommending modifying, I should say, the Yukon’s vaccine mandate — to make it more similar to that of jurisdictions such as the Northwest Territories.

Dr. Corriveau: Well, I’ll try to answer in the more generic way. I think it’s important to highlight that the office makes recommendations, and certainly in terms of a vaccine mandate, the maximum efficiencies or the effectiveness of that mandate is greater if the lesser number of exemptions are made. So, this is the thrust of our recommendation. Of course, it was done through Dr. Elliot, and I wasn’t here, but I still understand the principle.

Then the government receives those recommendations, and they make the final decision on whether they’re going to exempt this or that group or provide accommodations or even, like you said in Québec, where they decided to go back. So, it’s not the final decision of our office, but the recommendation, or the thrust of the recommendation, is to make the government aware — “Here’s our recommendation, and we recommend that you make the least possible exemptions.” That would be what we would recommend or how I would formulate it.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answer.

We have also heard concerns from employees of the Yukon government that the new policy applies to those who are either in a position where they could work at home and may have been doing so during the early stages of the pandemic or, in some cases, are actually already working at home now who are wondering why there would not be consideration of an exemption for them, if they choose not to get vaccinated and were able to continue working at home. It would just seem, at face value, that the risk of there being transmission is dramatically reduced if somebody is actually not in the office.

Could either of the witnesses provide any thoughts around this issue and whether there should be consideration of an exemption in such circumstances and, if not, why not?

Dr. Corriveau: I am sort of forced to fall back on my earlier response in the sense that our advice would be — the more exemptions that are allowed, the less effective the mandate becomes and more difficult to enforce. People who may work from home may have to go to work from time to

time, so anyway, that's probably the best answer I can give you in this Chamber.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answer, and I recognize that, as we heard before, the witnesses are also somewhat limited in not being able to share with us the details of the recommendations or the rationale for their — again, to the political leadership and government, we would again reiterate our request that recommendations from the office of the chief medical officer of health be made public in the interest of allowing members of the Official Opposition, members of the Third Party, and all Yukoners to just understand where those recommendations come from.

Talking again on the issue of the vaccine mandate, as we briefly discussed with the briefing of the acting chief medical officer of health earlier this month, an issue with any policy, including this vaccine mandate policy, is the question of what unintended consequences result from the policy.

The intent of the vaccine mandate is to encourage vaccination and reduce the risk of serious illness or death from COVID-19, as well as preventing our health care system from being overwhelmed as a result, but stepping beyond the intent, the reality is that some people will choose not to be vaccinated. Whether they're making that decision on the basis of good information or not, it is the reality that some, if forced to choose between vaccination and leave without pay from their job, will choose the second option and will effectively be losing their jobs.

With that, I trust that the witnesses will agree that there is a likelihood for some unintended negative consequences from this policy, including an increase in stress, other mental health problems, substance abuse, and potentially an increase in domestic violence. Can they talk about that for a moment? Did the modelling used in making the recommendation consider these unintended consequences? If so, are they able to indicate what the predicted impact of those secondary unintended consequences might be here?

Dr. Corriveau: Yes, thank you for the question, Madam Chair. I haven't seen any modelling. I think that it is a very important consideration. There is the technical, scientific advice that I have mentioned a couple of times, where the highest possible level of immunization that we can achieve is the way forward to protect Yukoners and get us out of this pandemic phase. At some point, there are other considerations that need to be factored in. At what point do we say that we have done enough or that we have achieved the goal and there is a diminishing return in continuing to push?

We talked earlier about the fact that none of us want these mandates to be permanent and that they be maintained for as short a time as possible. We know for a fact that — I was working in Alberta when they started their Delta wave in the middle of August, and immunization rates were barely at 66 percent. There was a big jump. It had a big impact to be able to say — even with a government that had said: "We will never do this" — ended up where it made a big difference, I think, for the province. They are one of the provinces now that has achieved higher rates of immunization.

These are the proper issues that need to be debated in this kind of a forum. They are not just technical and scientific, so I think that this is the right place to discuss it.

Mr. Cathers: I thank Dr. Corriveau for that answer. I do appreciate the challenge in this situation and note as well that I don't profess to have a clear picture of what those secondary impacts will look like. It is concerning for me, though, that when people who contact our office have decided that they're not going to get vaccinated, no matter what government says — I am concerned about the mental health of some of the people who have contacted us and concerned about where that may lead.

So, I would just flag that area to the office of the CMOH, as well as to government, and encourage them to look into that matter and to give it appropriate consideration because it is a concern, especially since December, as you know, statistically tends to have an increase in issues around depression and mental health issues, et cetera, and it is a difficult time of year for some folks. I would appreciate the consideration of government on that issue.

I want to move on to another matter here. Based on the briefing that we had earlier this month with Dr. Corriveau, we understand that, in recommending the reintroduction of the state of emergency and the other measures that Dr. Corriveau has referred to as the "circuit breaker", modelling was done that predicted an increase in COVID cases if those measures weren't taken. Now, we have not actually seen that. At the time of the briefing, Dr. Corriveau had indicated that he did have that information but wasn't sure at that point if he was able to share that modelling with us.

Again, I recognize that, for sharing some recommendations and information, the acting chief medical officer of health does require permission from the minister on that. Are you in a position at this point where you can share with us some of the modelling that was done that led up to the recommendation of the circuit-breaker measures?

Dr. Corriveau: I don't remember my exact words when we had that other briefing, but I think that my view is that it is more appropriate for the member to request it directly from the minister than from me. That would be my perspective on this.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate that. I am not trying to put you in a difficult position, Dr. Corriveau. I'm just asking for information. So, let the record show for the minister that we would like to see that information and, again, that we believe, in fact, that the government sharing recommendations and information from the office of the chief medical officer of health is important, not only in the interest of public transparency and ensuring that all Members of the Legislative Assembly are well-informed, as well as Yukon citizens, but, in fact, one of the best solutions, in my view, to people lacking confidence in a government's decisions is to provide them with the information of what those decisions are based upon to provide them with the data so that they can consider it themselves and better understand it themselves.

I recognize that the witnesses aren't going to be able to give me a different answer to that, but we would appreciate it if

the minister would agree to release that information, which, so far, they have not seen fit to do.

Moving to my next question for the witnesses, we have had people contact us with questions about how the vaccine passport system is being dealt with here and how that compares to what some western European countries are doing. I don't profess to be an expert on everything that is being done in Europe regarding the COVID response, but from reading media stories about it, as well as information from Yukoners who have contacted us, we understand that some European countries are allowing people who have had COVID to be considered as having natural immunity for a specified period of time afterwards. There was some indication in the letter that I referred to earlier — or more specifically, I should say, the November 20, 2021 letter from Yukon Communicable Disease Control to parents, guardians, and staff at École Whitehorse Elementary School indicated, as I quoted earlier, that all others not fully immunized or who have not recovered from lab-confirmed COVID-19 infection in the past 90 days are recommended to self-isolate.

There was some reference in the November 20 letter to “90 days”; it appears to be a reference, to some degree, to natural immunity post-infection. We understand that some European countries are allowing people who have had a COVID infection and have had that confirmed to be considered as having natural immunity for a specified period of time afterward. The witnesses could correct me if I'm mistaken on any of that, but it is my understanding that it is up to six months in some cases.

The question we have had from a number of people is just about the difference in how it is being handled here versus there. My question for the witnesses is: Could they explain why it is being dealt with differently here than in some western European countries regarding that specific issue?

Dr. Corriveau: Thank you for the question. It is a fact that re-infections are unusual within the first six months of having had infection. I haven't been part of those discussions here in the Yukon, but I know that, in the provinces where I have worked over the past several months, one of the considerations was the logistics and capacity of collecting that information and verifying it. There were many other considerations. The other consideration that is important is that people who have had COVID and get vaccinated get very high levels of protective immunity, so that's another factor that was taken into account. As far as I recall, every other province and territory has followed the same path. Yukon is no different from the other jurisdictions in this country.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate that information and would just flag for the attention of both the acting CMOH and the office as well as to government that this is a question that we do hear regularly from people. If the issues do relate to logistics capacity and the ability to verify versus the issue of actual immune protection, I would just suggest that consideration be given to whether it's possible to move to a situation where they are able to consider measures of that type. Again, I am just noting that this is something that comes up regularly from Yukoners.

I want to move on to the issue of Omicron, which has just been designated as a variant of concern. We have seen a number of countries, including Canada, announce new measures out of concern for the potential of this new variant. Can the witnesses please talk about what is currently known about Omicron, what isn't known, and what's being done here?

Dr. Corriveau: Actually, that was the one paragraph that I had left to read in my opening statement. I think that everyone is concerned about the fact that this new variant has been detected and seems to have already spread to many parts of the world before it was even detected.

We don't know enough right now to pass judgment about whether or not we should worry about it, whether it spreads more easily or not, or whether it causes more severe disease or not.

Actually, some indications are that it's a milder form of the virus, which would follow from the basic knowledge that we have of evolutionary biology with other viruses where they tend to get milder over time. If they can spread under the radar, in a sense, it gives them an advantage. It may not be because they spread more easily but just the fact that they spread.

At this point, it's just a note of caution for all of us. We can't let our guard down. Canada and other countries were burned in the first wave by not taking some measures early enough to slow down the spread. I think the measures that are being taken right now are more precautionary than based on some specific knowledge about the severity or the real risk associated with this virus. We don't even know to what extent our current vaccines protect or not against this variant. But I can tell you for a fact that we're in a lot better position than we were in January 2020 when the original strain arrived and we didn't have any capacity to produce vaccines.

Now we have capacity around the world to produce vaccine quickly. We are told that, especially with the mRNA technology, we could produce a new vaccine within a three-month period, which is quite different from what the situation was. Even though the media likes to highlight all the uncertainties, I think at this point that we want to avoid worrying people or panicking people. I think that we are in a good position. We have the surveillance systems in place, and the labs are able to analyze this virus as it arrives, which we didn't have before.

I think that the next month is going to be very important around the world as we pool our analysis and watch how things evolve. That's probably an added reason why we want to proceed cautiously in terms of removing all of our public health measures too quickly while this situation is being sorted out.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answer regarding that. I do find it also somewhat notable that, with the restrictions that have been announced by Canada and a number of other countries to deal with Omicron being identified as a variant of concern, it is somewhat notable to me, having been Minister of Health and Social Services back when work was being led by the federal government on pandemic preparedness, that some of the work, including a two-day conference in Toronto that we attended, included active discussion about the potential need to shut down flights from other countries where variants were

identified, and that struck me as notably different in Canada's response at the start of the pandemic compared to what had been planned back around 2007 and 2008. I do appreciate the indication as well that Omicron is not necessarily more serious but simply unknown at this point.

I want to move on to another area. I have a couple of questions about the process when changes are being made to public health rules, including when recommendations are provided by the office of the chief medical officer of health to government. My first question is just: What involvement of other parts of the system happens in the lead-up to those recommendations? Is there consultation done with hospitals, with medical clinics, with continuing care facilities, nurses' stations, as well as with First Nations who deliver health care services? Are they informed when changes to the recommendations are being contemplated? Are they involved in the development of that? How does that process work?

Dr. Corriveau: Madam Chair, I am a relative newcomer to the work of the department here, but I can tell you that I have just basically inherited Dr. Elliott's calendar and there are weekly calls with medical leaders and with chiefs and communities. Dr. Kancir is also taking regular — so, part of those discussions is to hear the concerns and take those into account as we develop and prioritize our work and recommendations. That is the best answer that I can provide right now because all I am saying is that my days include those regular opportunities to liaise with stakeholders across the board.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate that Dr. Corriveau is stepping into this role. I guess that it is somewhat like stepping onto a moving treadmill as you arrive and try to get up to speed immediately while dealing with all of the ordinary pressures of the day.

So, just to confirm, then — is the indication that there would be weekly calls with medical leaders, but they are not really formally involved in the actual development of recommendations — they wouldn't see draft copies, which wouldn't be shared, for example, with the Yukon Medical Association, medical clinics, hospitals, continuing care, or nurses' stations, et cetera?

Dr. Corriveau: Yes, Madam Chair, we wouldn't be sharing draft recommendations, but we certainly would be talking about the direction and what we're thinking about or even just getting their opinion about what they are seeing on the ground or what their concerns would be so that we can then take that into account.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answer. As it pertains to municipalities and unincorporated communities, what would the process be for either involving them or notifying them of changes when those changes are being made?

Dr. Corriveau: With regard to municipal governments, I just remember being in one meeting with business leaders. That was called by the minister and I was invited as a guest to participate in those consultations or discussions around the planned circuit breaker. It wasn't my lead, but I was certainly willing — and I think that Dr. Elliott or Dr. Kancir and I have always made ourselves available to any of the government

members who want us to participate with the stakeholders that they are accountable to or working with.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answer. I want to move on to the issue of vaccine options and information about them. I am not perfectly clear on where the line is between what the department would be doing under the direction of the minister and senior officials versus the office of the chief medical officer of health, but we have had concerns expressed to us for a while from Yukoners who had wanted to get access to a vaccine other than Moderna for adults — whether it be a preference for taking the Pfizer vaccine or a preference for taking either AstraZeneca or Janssen, which is commonly referred to in the media as "Johnson & Johnson". I would just ask the witnesses if they could talk about the role of the office in making recommendations around the availability of those vaccinations and whether they would agree with what we have heard — largely messaging from Health Canada and other public health officials that the best vaccine is the one in your arm.

Dr. Corriveau: Madam Chair, of course, we receive information from the National Advisory Committee based on the approval of the vaccines and the effectiveness and safety data that has been reviewed by Health Canada. Then it goes into considerations around logistics — which ones can we actually get? So, for example, Canada was slated initially to receive the Janssen vaccine — Johnson & Johnson — and then the manufacturing plant in the US had problems and we couldn't get any. We learned over time and going back to my work in the NWT and in Alberta — by June, the superiority of the mRNA vaccines in terms of effectiveness and safety was so great that most provinces decided not to order any more AstraZeneca at the time. Johnson & Johnson was just not available in Canada until very recently. There was a request, I think, initially made by Alberta and BC. Canada, through some negotiations, was able to get 20,000 doses for the whole country. It's not like we decide which vaccines are going to be offered. We all know that Pfizer and Moderna had production difficulties at the beginning, and sometimes we could only get one or just the other. That was the one that was being offered. This is how it has gone pretty much from the get-go.

As medical officers, we would recommend — and I would still do that — the mRNA vaccine over any other one, because their safety profile is greater and their effectiveness is greater as well both in terms of length of protection and the level of protection from those vaccines.

Whether we are able to offer choice or not depends on availability and our ability to distribute it and not to waste vaccines. That is really more of a departmental function and the logistics of what we're able or not able to do.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answer. I would just ask if the witnesses happen to have at their fingertips the data around comparing the level of protection and length of protection of the vaccines available to put on the record. There is a lot of information that people do hear out there. If you happen to have that information near, if you could provide it. If I'm putting you on the spot and you don't have those numbers right at your fingertips, then I would just ask if you could

potentially provide that to the minister and ask the minister to provide that information at a later date.

Dr. Corriveau: Madam Chair, I'm just going to go from memory in terms of the latest figures I recall seeing, but we can certainly provide the most up-to-date data in this regard.

As of still recently, the mRNA vaccine — we're still providing against severe disease well into the 90-percent range in terms of protection, while the AstraZeneca and Janssen type, which are the same platform, really — the AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson are the same platform, the same way as the Pfizer and Moderna are and mRNA. We're closer to 80 percent in terms of protection against severe disease and quite lower in terms of infection. The side effect profile is higher, even though they're still rare. Those vaccines were associated with the blood clot problem and other still rare side effects but nonetheless more serious than mRNA have shown to provide. So, I would still recommend mRNA over any other vaccine that is currently available. There are going to be more vaccines coming up the line later on but probably not until the spring.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Dr. Corriveau, for that information. I do appreciate that.

One other question that we've heard from a number of people is just information about case severity here in the Yukon during the outbreak.

I may be putting the question the wrong way, but I am just wondering what information you can provide about the severity of the cases and how that compares in vaccinated versus unvaccinated, as well as, during the outbreak, what it looked like as far as hospitalizations.

Dr. Corriveau: Madam Chair, the difference between the level of protection between vaccinated and unvaccinated varies according to age and also whether someone has an at-risk condition — advanced age or diabetes. There are some diseases that put people at higher risk or that are immunocompromising illnesses. In a young, middle-aged adult, the difference is still about 40:1 in terms of having a severe infection if you are vaccinated or you are not. It goes all the way down to those who have other factors involved. It may go down to five or six — the range is 1:5 or 1:6. So, there is a difference, but the benefit is always there and quite significant.

Mr. Cathers: I just wanted to make sure that I understood that statistic properly. Dr. Corriveau, were you indicating — with 40:1 — that, for younger adults, you are 40 times more likely to be hospitalized or have a severe illness if you are unvaccinated than vaccinated?

Dr. Corriveau: That is correct, Madam Chair.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answers to my questions. I could go on here for much longer. There are many questions that we have had, of course, from people and we have provided them directly to the minister in past briefings. However, due to the time that we are at here, I will just thank the witnesses for appearing here today, and thank you and all of your staff for the work that you have been doing throughout the pandemic. I know that it is stressful and difficult at times for people involved, and I just want to, on behalf of the Official Opposition, acknowledge everyone in your offices as well as who have helped out with the Yukon government's response to

COVID-19, including the vaccination clinics, and for the work that they have done.

Again, thank you for answering my questions, and I will turn the floor over to the Third Party so that they can ask questions in the limited time that we have available here today.

Ms. White: I thank my colleague and welcome the witnesses. I apologize for the odd behaviour as I turn my back while speaking directly to you.

Just to get started, understanding that vaccinations will be available for children ages five to 11 and currently are available for those from 12 to 17 and knowing that the vaccine mandate is in place, some of the concerns that I have are for children in families where the decision has been made not to be vaccinated. Knowing a 12-year-old child can't necessarily make their own appointment to go to the vaccination clinic to be vaccinated, the idea that a child should be prevented from participating in extracurricular activities like sport — it is worrisome, to be honest.

I know that if I look at the age of consent for sexual activity in the Yukon, it's 16 years old. If I look at the *Care Consent Act* for health, it's 19 years old. How do we reconcile it for children? Will the vaccine mandate extend to children ages five to 11? How do we reconcile for children now between the ages of 12 and 17 whose families may have made decisions that they are not able to influence?

Dr. Corriveau: The comments of the member are very close to my own thoughts about this issue. It's one of the issues that we want to make sure will be considered as we review the end of the circuit breaker.

Ms. White: I do thank the doctor for that answer. I appreciate that it is being thought about. I am not surprised to hear that, but I am grateful to hear that.

It is a bit challenging to have two acting chief medical officers of health here because some of the questions that we have predate you. It's challenging to figure out where that information can be shared. I don't want to put anyone on the spot, but I'm going to ask some questions that you may not have the answer to.

I would like to know when the recommendation was made — or did the office of the CMOH make a recommendation — to drop the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* in August of this year?

Dr. Corriveau: The answer is: I don't know.

Ms. White: I will just get it out there on record, then.

One of the stark differences between Yukon and the rest of Canada is that, at one point in time, Yukon and Manitoba were the only two jurisdictions in Canada without a mask mandate in public. Then Manitoba changed, and Yukon was on its own.

Is the CMOH office able to mandate large-scale mask wearing without the *Civil Emergencies Measures Act*?

Dr. Corriveau: My understanding is that the office would be the one making recommendations, as was done recently. To put it as a mandate, it has to be an order that is issued under those measures. We would still recommend wearing a mask, but it wouldn't be mandatory unless there was an order that would empower that to be mandated to everybody or in certain settings.

Ms. White: I thank the witness for that. I guess the challenge is looking out across Canada. There was the requirement for people to wear masks in public, but here it was strongly recommended. I'm just trying to figure out whether or not the office of the CMOH here is able to make those requirements without the CEMA, so I will leave that and move on.

Understanding that the Omicron variant was just recently recognized in a more global way, are we testing for that new variant now in Yukon? At this point in time, have we seen that variant yet?

Dr. Corriveau: The specific identification of the Omicron variant requires technology that is only available in some provincial labs and at the National Microbiology Laboratory in Ottawa. We rely on the support of the BC Centre for Disease Control in that regard. They are just tooling up right now. Even they have to rely on some support from the National Microbiology Laboratory, but the technology is there, like I said earlier. I think that we will be able to identify it very quickly. Québec and Ontario were able to identify it right away. It is just a matter of screening the samples.

We were on the call on Sunday with the other chief medical officers, and most of the labs were basically screening for the Delta variant, which was the only one around. Now what they are doing is that they are doing the screening for Delta and then, if it doesn't score for Delta, they go to the gene sequencing, which takes a little bit of time to get it done, but it identifies it quickly. So, we will find out, but over the weekend, the Public Health Agency was providing information on recent travellers from the countries that were identified as at risk, and we didn't get any notification. So, at this point, that was the group that was being focused on.

Ms. White: I appreciate that answer from the witness. I can look back to my own time here — in 2020 when we started seeing the headlines coming out of China at the time and how quickly it spread globally. One of the reasons why I am asking about the Omicron now is to get a better idea. Had you asked any of us in January 2020 if we would be here now, near the end of 2021, I would like to think that the answer would have been no. If I looked back to SARS and Canada's experience, it was drastically different than the COVID one. I do appreciate that we wait for the BC Centre for Disease Control; that makes lot of sense.

My colleague touched on the non-mRNA vaccines. Madam Chair, one of the reasons why I just want to go back to this is that it seems to me that, in this time of division, as many options as possible just makes sense. So, we have the vaccine mandate, we know that the federal government has approved both the Pfizer and the Johnson & Johnson, and it seems to me that making those options available is important. I do appreciate, from your perspective of medicine, that you are saying that Moderna makes more sense; I appreciate that. But, for people who are vaccine hesitant, it would seem to me that being able to make a choice that both answers the federal government's requirement for vaccination and their own ability to make that decision is important. One of the challenges is that, right now on the yukon.ca website, it says that those are

available for the next two days — so, today and tomorrow. Is there any intention of the CMOH office directing that those be available on a longer term basis?

Dr. Corriveau: The best answer that I can provide is that it's not just about recommending this vaccine or that vaccine, but it's whether or not we are able to procure it, whether or not it's even available for sale — and through the federal government, which controls all of the purchase and distribution of vaccines. If we can't procure it in a secure way, then, even if access is technically possible, it doesn't mean that it's always feasible to implement it or make it available in an equitable way.

Ms. White: I do appreciate that answer.

I know that, back in early 2020 when the development of vaccines was happening, one of the concerns, of course, in the north was storage. What are the storage requirements, for example, for the Janssen or the Pfizer? Then, just for all of the vaccines, what's the shelf life? Does it vary greatly between different vaccinations, or is there a kind of middle of the road? You talked about the ability of getting them and procuring them, which makes sense, but what are the storage requirements and what's the shelf life on those?

Dr. Kancir: Admittedly, I don't have the information handy to tell you exactly what the exact shelf life is. I can say that one of the considerations early on was storage requirements for the vaccines. We certainly have seen some changes in that. I can mention that the pediatric vaccines have had some changes in some of the buffer solutions to change some of that. So, there have been some improvements in it, but to comment on what exactly the exact shelf life is and what the storage requirements are — I don't know that.

Dr. Corriveau: Of course, the shelf life depends on when it was produced at the plant and where it was stored before and for how long. So, it can vary even for the same product depending on which batch we have received. But there have been certainly a lot of improvements. Initially in the territories, the choice for the Moderna was based primarily on the fact that it was the one that could be shipped the most easily to remote communities.

Even though the others were approved, we didn't have a lot of choice. Those working in Nunavut, which I was at the time, or in the Yukon — so it kind of guided and directed our path this way, so it's not just about saying, "We recommend this vaccine or that vaccine", but it's which we can we get. Now we know a lot more, and the companies have learned a lot more too, so they have allowed — and their licenses now permit — a longer shelf life in the fridge, compared to being kept frozen, and how long you thaw it before using — so, things are evolving to this day. Even the pediatric vaccines by Pfizer, which used to have more stringent shipping requirements, are allowing this vaccine to be kept in the fridge a lot longer than even the adult version.

Ms. White: I thank the witnesses for that. Science is a fascinating thing. I know that one of the discussions at the time when we were looking at the vaccine here was the extreme cold storage, so whatever the temperature of the freezer had to be, I

know that, at the time, the Department of Environment had one, but that was definitely one of the considerations.

During the briefing that we had on the phone about 10 days ago, we asked about vaccine mandates for early childhood professionals. At the time, Dr. Corriveau, you responded that the recommendation was that folks who work with vulnerable segments of the population should be vaccinated, so I asked you then and I'm going to ask you again now: Are young children considered a vulnerable population?

Dr. Corriveau: No, actually, because of their age, unless they are in a special high-risk group for medical reasons, young children are not considered a high-risk population, so that's why they are not included.

Ms. White: Then I guess the next question is: If a child is in a full-time early childhood education program, and a child who is five is in kindergarten, why does one child get the protection of having vaccinated teachers and one does not?

Dr. Corriveau: Well, I am not sure about the distinction, but children have a very low incidence of severe illness. Actually, the risk is greater for the staff who are adults than for the children themselves in that age group. I am not sure what other considerations were taken into account when the decision was made for that cut-off.

Ms. White: I thank the witness for that.

During briefings with officials, sometimes that happens with them as well. The answer is maybe not from your office, and that's okay as well.

One of the things that I think was really fascinating was during the school council meeting with École Whitehorse Elementary School. That was the first time many heard that educators had access to rapid testing, so I was hoping that the witnesses could walk us through how that works for educators. I will start with that.

Dr. Kancir: The process we are talking about is a process that happens at the COVID Testing and Assessment Centre — CTAC — in Whitehorse. When someone shows up for testing, the team there is screening for a few groups of people who would get access to a rapid test. The consideration is there: When I use the term “rapid test”, it is for a very fast turnaround that we could do at our hospital. It is really focused on maintaining capacity of some essential services. Historically, we have done that for health care staff and physicians, trying to maintain our ERs, nurses who are working in the hospital, and ad hoc cases as they come through.

As our cases started to increase in the territory, the decision was also made to include teachers and teaching staff. That is something that, instead of it being something that is done on an ad hoc basis with consultation directly to our office, it was something that would be done as part of their screening process. Someone who would fit that category would show up, be asked if they worked in one of these settings and in one of these roles, and then would get access to that rapid test.

When I use the term “rapid test”, it might be a bit different from what everyone might use when they refer to a “rapid test”. This is a test for a symptomatic individual who is showing up for those guidelines that are not screening, so that distinction is

important. Again, it is done at the point of testing through CTAC.

Ms. White: I mean, I think it is a good tool, now that the Yukon Teachers' Association and others know.

There has been a lot of talk in the territory about rapid testing, and I will go with the witness' definition of “rapid testing”. I am going to use my own family as an example, just to highlight some of the concerns.

So, my younger sister has three children: 14, eight, and six. The eight-year-old and six-year-old share a bedroom. They live in a very small house. The eight-year-old has now been off two different times from school. His classroom has been shut down due to a COVID exposure notice. My sister now no longer has access to any paid sick leave because she has gone above and beyond now those 10 days. How does the office of the CMOH reconcile notifications going out to parents saying that children need to self-isolate for a number of days from an entire classroom — how does the office look at those, and how can we best support families as they're grappling with these?

In the example of my own family, the two younger children share a bedroom. The youngest child has gone to school throughout the entire time. The middle child has now missed, I guess, about a month for two separate exposure notices. So, how do we reconcile self-isolating parts of families, but the rest can go about their regular business?

Dr. Kancir: This is a very good question and one that we often get about our recommendations to students in a classroom, what it means for a household, and what it means largely for the families in the territory. I think one thing that is important to clarify is that, when we give a direction to a classroom for a classroom exposure contact, the advice is to isolate to prevent the further spread of COVID in the community. It doesn't mean that they are a case. If someone were a case, we would be giving isolation directions to everyone in that household to isolate. Contacts who have household members, those household members are contacts of a contact. That is an extension of risk. We don't actually believe that group has been exposed to COVID, but we are asking the contact to isolate.

Again, if there was a case, we would ask them to isolate, so sometimes the direction to a household may seem like it's very different: Why are we asking some households to isolate and others not to? Again, the distinction is whether it is a case or a contact.

In regard to the pressures it puts on households, I will say that it is very difficult. One of the things that we are hopeful for is that everyone in the territory, especially those with children, will see the difference that we have experienced in our high schools and our elementary schools. We look at our high schools, and students have been able to get vaccinated who are over 12, and the cases that we have in high school are vastly different, compared to elementary school. I think our case notifications are something like 10:1, in terms of the difference, so it is a reminder to all of us that, as the vaccine becomes more available in the territory, the burden to families can really be alleviated if people start to access that vaccination. So, we're

hopeful that that experience will be incredibly different in early 2022, as that vaccine starts to roll out in Yukon.

Ms. White: I do thank the witness for that clarification. At this point in time, how many — I'm not even sure how to ask the question: if I should say, "How many classrooms have been shut down?" or if I should say, "How many..." — maybe I'll just try that way. How many classrooms have been shut down at this point in time? So, if I say "classrooms", I mean per case. So, if a school has a notification, and the classroom is shut for two weeks, how many of those have happened since September of this year when school started?

Dr. Kancir: In terms of a global number, I actually don't have that information available. I can say that, as of this morning, we had 17 active exposure notices in the territory, and so those would be classrooms where, if people were not fully vaccinated, we would be asking them to isolate. That has been a steady decrease over the past few weeks. Again, currently it's 17 active, and we have no outbreaks, which means that there has been no evidence of transmission within that classroom.

Ms. White: I thank the witness for that.

So, with those 17 current classroom notifications, how long is that classroom closed for?

Dr. Kancir: It completely depends on the risk assessment. So, every case in a classroom goes through an investigation with YCDC, and the questions are asked: "What was the symptom onset for this case? How long has this person potentially been infected and how long, depending on their exposures in the classroom, does that classroom need to be out of class?" So, it is a tailored response to each case. It may be up to 10 days, but oftentimes, we find that people are being found, and they may have been in school for a few days, and so that's a shortened period. But as of right now, the recommendation would be 10 days, based from symptom onset, and then again, it is tailored to the individual case.

Ms. White: I'm just going to keep thanking the witness for the answers.

With the understanding that there is up to 10 days that a classroom can be closed, is there no other way to manage? For example, all the children and the teacher being tested? Negative tests, you can go back to school, or one test and then a test in two days? I guess this is one of the questions and why families keep on asking about rapid testing. I understand that it's a little less invasive, but has there ever been a look or a conversation around minimizing those closures? Again, the disruption — a parent or a caregiver is home, what that looks like. Have there been those discussions internally?

Dr. Kancir: There have been questions around the testing strategy for schools. I think that one of the things that we have had to balance has been the value of the different tests that we would be putting out in terms of — how accurate would a test be if it was done on an asymptomatic student versus a symptomatic student? So, the balance of that information — looking at what the risk is that we might be missing something, what the potential risk is that the test itself is giving us a false negative or a false positive has been balanced. The discussions have happened.

I think that one of the other considerations has been that, when we have been at the peak of our testing with schools, would we have the capacity to actually be testing the number of students in classrooms who would have had exposure notices, and would that potentially be edging out people who needed to have a test because they were symptomatic? On balance, the best approach for the territory was to recommend the isolation period. It has been successful. I would say that the vast majority of our cases have been single cases in classrooms, so we have been able to contain spread — through what we have seen and what we have been doing in-territory — and again, the recommendation from the office has been to maintain the testing strategy that we currently have.

Ms. White: How often do the tests that you just referenced — so, probably the rapid tests — give false negatives? Is there a percentage where a test would give a false negative and where the person would actually test positive if tested again?

Dr. Corriveau: Madam Chair, I don't have the exact number. It is just that, with the rapid antigen tests, the sensitivity is quite poor, so they tend to get better as you get closer to the time where you become infectious because you need a certain load of virus to be able to detect it. They are not that good in the asymptomatic situations. They are actually better — unless you do them serially, because you can test right now and then become infectious six hours later or even four hours later, so that is why they are viewed, generally speaking, as not that helpful to manage, except in specific circumstances.

Ms. White: One of the challenges — or maybe the recognition that I have learned in the last 20 months — is the importance of communication and clearly communicating. Dr. Corriveau, I brought this up when we were getting the briefing, but I am going to spend just a bit more time, because we have a little bit more time with you than previously.

This has to do, unfortunately, with the deaths that we have had due to COVID. One of the reasons I want to bring this up is that, right now, a lot of what we may be facing here — and your office is definitely facing — is, I would almost say, the battle of the miscommunication or the misinformation and trying to combat that with the facts and what is happening. One of the challenges is the information available prior and the information that is currently available.

Bear with me as I am just going to lay it out a little bit. I have excerpts from the first 11 deaths that we had in the territory due to COVID.

Number one, it came out in a statement that it was in Watson Lake, and Hanley said that the individual was older and had significant underlying medical conditions. He said that the person died unexpectedly but peacefully.

Number two, the Whitehorse resident was linked to a previous case and was unvaccinated.

Three, the Whitehorse resident was linked to a previous case and unvaccinated.

Four, no details were given.

Five, Hanley said that the person died on Wednesday night in hospital. He also said the deceased person was not vaccinated — an unfortunate fact.

Six, in a statement, condolences were offered to the family: “We must also use these hard experiences to reinforce the importance of vaccination as a life saving measure in our fight against COVID-19.”

Number seven, again, the person died in hospital on Wednesday night. He said that an unfortunate fact was that this person was not immunized.

Number eight, in this individual’s case, they were unvaccinated and had pre-existing conditions.

Number nine, none of the people who have died in the Yukon were fully vaccinated.

So, we have those as the beginning communication.

Another example is number 11. The acting chief medical officer of health — yourself — said in a news release that the territory would not be releasing any additional information about the death. We saw that for number 12 as well. Partially, the reason why I am asking why we have changed the way in which we are communicating it is because it is fuelling the mistrust. I can tell you that I have been contacted and that I have been told that this person was double vaccinated or that person was vaccinated, and the reason why I don’t think it’s good for the community is because I think that it’s also important where you said that a person in their 40s and in good health who was vaccinated had a 1:40 chance of requiring hospitalization.

But the truth of the matter is that there is also the flipside that sometimes something happens. When was the decision made to change how we were reporting that? Why have we gone from a few details that don’t indicate the person individually to no details?

Dr. Corriveau: I have to apologize if I created that misconception. My response initially when it was my first news conference — and I responded in the way that I would have responded personally everywhere else I’ve worked, not realizing that the detail had been provided before. So, it’s not like a change of policy as much as the fact that I personally didn’t feel comfortable to release personal information on individuals. I’m certainly willing to provide it in the aggregate. I’m comfortable to say that we’ve had 13 deaths and, as far as I know, two were immunized and 10 were not, but that’s how far I personally feel comfortable in providing levels of detail. The risk remains greater for unimmunized people, and the fact that our data and the data from every other jurisdiction that I know of shows that, even among the fully vaccinated, they tend to have a lot of other conditions that make it likely that the vaccination was less impactful for them. I told you earlier that the differential goes down in terms of vaccinated and non-vaccinated depending on age and on the other risk factors that the person may have that diminishes the impact — although there is always a difference. There is always a difference, but the margin of difference decreases depending on age and other risk factors.

Ms. White: I do really appreciate that answer. I guess that these days, when people are using every piece of information or non-information to fuel the arguments, you just walked into something that was different from what had been done before and I do appreciate your answer here.

I will urge the folks who help you with communications to recognize that — well, I don’t even know how to address those in a different way because, right now, that divide is strong in the Yukon, especially with tomorrow being November 30 and December 1 being the day after.

Just to go back to that, one thing that I think has been really important, even from my own learning or understanding of the virus, is that, even when vaccinated, we have the ability to transmit the virus. I think that going back to folks and information and non-information about fuelling hesitancy is that there are some people in the non-vaccine camp who strongly say that even people who are vaccinated are transmitting. How would the two of you in your roles respond to that? How would you share the information or how would you urge someone to be vaccinated when they are using the argument that, even if you are vaccinated, you can still transmit the disease?

Dr. Corriveau: This is a very good question. I think that it is important that we communicate effectively in this regard. Certainly, at the beginning — before the arrival of the Delta variant, in particular — we had some strong hopes that not only would this vaccine prevent serious disease, but it might also prevent infection altogether. We are seeing that this is not always the case.

I think that the big difference is that, first of all, the breakthrough infections occur in very specific circumstances. Usually, it is because you are exposed to a very high viral load within your household. Most of those cases occur in areas where there is somebody with an active disease and you are spending a lot of time with that person. You are either taking care of them in the household or you are a parent and you’re taking care of a sick child all day and all night for several days, so there’s the possibility of a breakthrough infection. It’s harder to get it, first of all, if you are vaccinated, and you won’t be sick as long because your immune system is already primed, so you will respond quicker. It is like you have some defense. It’s like you are trying to start a fire with wet wood versus dry wood. So, if the heat is high enough, you can still get the wet piece of wood to fire, but it takes longer, and it won’t burn as easily and as long. So, the same way, if you are immunized, you are going to — yes, you can transmit briefly, while your immune system kicks in, but we know that people who are vaccinated don’t get sick as long, and they don’t get as sick, either. So, that is still, for me, the point that we have to hammer on and keep insisting on, that the data still shows a very high level of effectiveness, especially with the mRNA vaccines, against severe infection and it shortens the duration so that if people are wearing a mask and other precautions, they won’t be spreading it easily to others — as easily as somebody who gets sicker longer. That is the best I can give you right now.

Ms. White: I think that comparing it to firewood in this jurisdiction was a clever comparison, because we all understand that, so I do appreciate that.

Interestingly enough, when the previous chief medical officer of health appeared in the gallery as a witness last December, I actually didn’t ask a single question about COVID, because they had already all been asked. In the last

couple of minutes, I just have a couple of questions that are non-COVID-related but are very much under the guise, in my mind, of the responsibilities of the chief medical officer of health and that office, as far as public health.

So, the Yukon Medical Association recently passed several important resolutions, and so, I wanted to know if the CMOH has been active in support of files like safe supply and supervised consumption in the past and if there will be any points coming out about the recent announcements across the country about the need to decriminalize personal use of illicit drugs and, especially in our case in the territory, the creation of a managed alcohol program and then making available alternative opioid therapies in communities.

Chair: I encourage the witnesses not to answer the question because it is beyond the scope of the questions to be asked, which are related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms. White: I guess I didn't get the memo that it was solely COVID questions today. I will put the buzz out, though, to the office that those are important points that will be coming up in the future.

With that, Madam Chair, I believe — I'm just going to check to see if there are any more questions, but I believe that is it for me today. I want to thank the witnesses. Of course, your offices, as we've heard from my colleague — I recognize the amount of work and the pressure that you all face, and I do appreciate it. Thank you for appearing today.

Chair: Are there any further questions for the witnesses?

Mr. Cathers: Since there is a bit of time remaining, I will just ask a few other questions of the witnesses while they're here.

I just want to return to the issue of the booster shots for people under the age of 50. If I understood correctly when the witnesses answered earlier, my understanding was that those would likely not be flowing out for people below the age of 50 other than in specified groups, such as the health care sector and the immunocompromised, until after the childhood vaccination campaigns are complete — if the witnesses could just either confirm or correct that.

Also, would it be possible to indicate, for people aged 18-plus — like in that age group of between 18 and 50 — when witnesses anticipate that likely booster shots would begin happening?

Also, related to that, would that likely occur all at the same time or in a phased approach? What I mean with that is would you envision that would likely be a decision to move from 50 and up being the category to 18 and up being the category, or would that age range drop to something in between 18 and 50 and then move to 18 being the lowest age at a later date?

Dr. Corriveau: These considerations are still under discussion. It's really an operational issue. We have established the priority, which was initially the first and second dose in adults and then boosters for people over 50, health care workers, and now we're moving to the five to 11, so it's really as soon as possible and consulting with front-line and others, as well as supply chain — so, this is still under consideration; I can't give the timing.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate that the witness is indicating that they are not in a position to give timing. Of course, it is something where, as soon as either the office of the chief medical officer of health or the government are able to provide that information, that is something that is a topic of active interest for Yukoners.

I would just ask, with the rollout of both the booster shots for those who are now eligible and for the childhood vaccinations for those in the five-to-11 age group, if the witnesses could talk for a moment about what is being done in terms of making that available within communities outside Whitehorse, of course. In case the witnesses aren't familiar with the reference, it's communities in rural Yukon. What steps are being taken, and what steps are anticipated being taken next to make those shots available in rural Yukon?

Dr. Corriveau: We received the childhood vaccine late last week and, of course, there was preliminary work done to make sure that the vaccination community — nurses and others — were trained to provide it. Like we indicated earlier, there are special considerations and a special approach with young children. We need to have our staff prepared, so that training was done.

The product is a little bit different. Then it's basically making sure that the supplies are distributed and having the online booking system. I am not sure if it's only for Whitehorse or if it applies elsewhere. I am not familiar with the setup, but the health centres will move as quickly as they can. I also know that some additional staff have been procured to support this vaccine drive.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you. I do appreciate the answer.

I would also appreciate — we understand that the vaccination efforts, both in Whitehorse and in rural Yukon, do place a significant strain on the capacity of the system to respond to it. We had heard concerns at one point that this was resulting in an impact on other vaccination campaigns such as childhood vaccinations and travel vaccinations. Is it still impacting those services as a result of having to direct those toward the COVID vaccination campaigns? If that is the case, are you able to predict when there might be the resumption to more normal availability of those other vaccinations?

Dr. Corriveau: I will respond to the best of my ability. I know for a fact that our access to travel vaccines has been impacted. That remains the case as far as I know. With regard to child vaccinations — the core primary series for babies — there might be slight delays in giving some of the boosters, but from a medical public health perspective, it is still quite acceptable. I think every jurisdiction in Canada has suffered some setbacks in the school-based programs, but to be honest, I am not up to date on the situation in the Yukon with regard to the school programs. I can assure you that I have insisted since I have arrived that the core vaccines for infants and children are still a top priority above anything else.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate that information from Dr. Corriveau, as well as the indication that you have emphasized the importance of those childhood vaccinations as well.

I do appreciate the witnesses appearing here this afternoon and answering questions from me as well as from the Third Party. It went a little quicker with some of them than I anticipated, but I do appreciate the information provided.

I would, again, conclude by thanking you for the work you are doing and noting that, while I do understand and appreciate that it's not up to the acting chief medical officer of health to make that information available to us, I would just reiterate the request to government, as Dr. Corriveau indicated we should do. We do believe that providing the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health, or the acting CMOH, to all Members of the Legislative Assembly and to the public would assist with helping Yukoners be better informed and helping members of the Assembly be better prepared to ask questions on behalf of constituents, as well as share information with constituents. As the Leader of the Third Party made reference to, there is a lot of information — both accurate and not — floating out there right now, and I believe that one of the best solutions that government can provide in response to that is sunlight — making that information available publicly.

With that, I will conclude my questions and, again, thank both doctors for appearing here today.

Chair: Are there any further questions for the witnesses?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Madam Chair, I don't have a question; I just want to thank Dr. Corriveau and Dr. Kancir for being here today and for providing all this information to Members of the Legislative Assembly and to Yukoners through this opportunity this afternoon. Thank you so much.

Chair: Thank you. The witnesses are now excused.

Witnesses excused

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

May the House have a report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*, and directed me to report progress.

Also, pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 5 adopted earlier today, witnesses appeared before Committee of the Whole to answer questions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to

Speaker: This House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

The following legislative return was tabled November 29, 2021:

35-1-17

Response to oral question from Ms. White re: mining project oversight — Alexco (Streicker)

The following documents were filed November 29, 2021:

35-1-30

Potential removal of the landlord's right to issue 2- and 3-month notices to vacate, letter re (dated November 25, 2021) from Shannon Teja, President, Yukon Residential Landlord Association, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (Mostyn)

35-1-31

Energy Retrofit Loan Program / Better Buildings Program, letter re (dated October 6, 2021) from Dan Curtis, Mayor, City of Whitehorse, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (Dixon)

35-1-32

Better Buildings Program, letter re (dated November 25, 2021) from Mayor and Council, Town of Watson Lake, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (McLeod)

35-1-33

Proposed changes to the *Municipal Act* and *Taxation and Assessment Act*, letter re (dated November 25, 2021) from Trevor Ellis, Mayor, Village of Mayo, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (White)

35-1-34

Proposed changes to the *Municipal Act* and *Taxation and Assessment Act*, letter re (dated November 12, 2021) from Gord Curran, Mayor, Village of Teslin, to Kate White, Leader of the Third Party (White)

35-1-35

Adult access to Pfizer-BioNTech's Comirnaty COVID-19 Vaccine, letter re (dated November 26, 2021) from Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Health and Social Services, to Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge (Cathers)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 40

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, November 30, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier Government House Leader* Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
Hon. Nils Clarke	Riverdale North	Minister of Highways and Public Works; Environment
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Government House Leader* Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Minister of Economic Development; Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Jeanie McLean	Mountainview	Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

Currie Dixon	Leader of the Official Opposition Copperbelt North	Scott Kent	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Yvonne Clarke	Porter Creek Centre	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Emily Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Annie Blake	Vuntut Gwitchin

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

*Government House Leader: Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee to November 4, 2021; Hon. John Streicker from November 5, 2021

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, November 30, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.
 We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will proceed with the Order Paper.
 Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I ask the Legislative Assembly — in inviting some guests who are here for the 40th anniversary of the Yukon permanent art collection tribute today — with us are Laurel Parry, who was our former manager of arts at the Department of Tourism and Culture, and Jan Ogilvy, Laurel's mom, and renowned Yukoner Emma Barr, also a 2021 Yukon permanent art collection art acquisition artist, are here today. Can we give them a hand, please?

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of COVID-19 vaccination teams

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to ask my colleagues to join me today in recognizing the tremendous efforts of the many Yukoners working in our vaccine clinics, community health centres, and in case and contact management.

To begin, I want to thank our nurses and vaccine delivery teams. Over the past 10 months, these people have demonstrated their strong and consistent leadership, flexibility, professionalism, patience, and compassion. From the start of the pandemic, the community nursing team has supported Yukoners and has worked tirelessly to keep us all safe. This team is led by Sheila Thompson, director of Community Nursing, and Jane Boutette, assistant director of Community Nursing. The Yukon owes these two dedicated nursing professionals, and all of the nurses and staff on their team, our deepest gratitude.

I also want to recognize our nurses in charge and their teams at our community health centres across the territory. They are truly local heroes.

At the Yukon immunization program, Marija Pavkovic and her team provide invaluable policy training resources to support vaccine rollout, and they also procure the vaccine supply for the territory.

I would also like to recognize Brenda Dedon, manager of Public Health Programs, and everyone at the Whitehorse Health Centre.

Also at the Whitehorse vaccine clinic is John Coyne, manager of emergency surge response and infection control.

John and his team support the overall operation of the vaccine clinic, as well as rural mobilization logistics — not an easy job.

Our staff at the chronic conditions support program have also reprofiled and adapted their work to support our vaccine efforts. At last count, our vaccination teams have provided more than 75,000 doses to Yukoners. This is an incredible number, and their work is not over yet. While vaccinating Yukoners is a central part of our pandemic response, COVID-19 testing and case and contact management are equally crucial.

I want to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of Lori Strudwick, Jan McFadzen, and Griffin Brunger at the Yukon Centre for Disease Control. They have led a resilient team that has rapidly adjusted staffing levels to meet the demand, which has doubled during each wave of COVID-19.

I also want to recognize Orlea Rollins and the team at the COVID testing and assessment centre, Warren Pearson at the drive-through and rapid response teams, and Benton Foster, acting director of Community Health programs, who is responsible for the YCDC, the Yukon immunization program and testing operations.

All of the people I have named today, and the hundreds whom I have not, continue to demonstrate their passion, perseverance, and dedication. I want all of them to know that everyone in this House and all Yukoners recognize how much they have done for us all. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize and thank all of the health care professionals and those behind the scenes who have worked throughout the pandemic vaccination campaigns to ensure that Yukoners have access to first, second, and now, in some cases, third vaccinations.

We have seen immunization teams stationed here in Whitehorse and others travelling throughout the Yukon to put on vaccination clinics in all communities. As I mentioned, of course, there are others behind the scene supporting those on the front line and helping to make the system work from both the procurement of the vaccine to booking of the appointments and to management of the overall campaign. With the vaccination campaign for five- to 11-year-olds just ramping up, I'm sure that they will continue to be busy throughout the Christmas season.

As the Omicron variant has now been declared a variant of concern, it is notable that both the United States CDC and the United Kingdom's Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation are recommending that everyone 18-plus receive a third dose as a booster shot. Health Canada has also approved the use of both Moderna and Pfizer booster shots for people 18-plus, and some Canadian jurisdictions are already making that available.

We recognize the limited capacity here and that it is dedicated to vaccinations for children and others right now, but we also do take this opportunity to urge the government to make booster shots available to Yukoners 18 years and up as soon as possible.

The work of health professionals running our vaccination clinics will be key to that work. Again, I would like to recognize, in addition to those on the front lines, those behind the scenes, and all of them play an integral part of making it happen.

Thank you again to all of you and know that the important work that you are doing is appreciated, and I would like to close by thanking all of our health care professionals for the work they do — before the pandemic and during it. I know that it has placed additional strain on you and your families during the pandemic.

Thank you again on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition.

Applause

Ms. White: I am pleased to stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP to thank and celebrate the vaccine clinic workers and those across the Yukon on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. No one would have ever anticipated that we would still be deep into this pandemic close to 21 months later. When I think about the things that stand out throughout these many months, I think about those on the front lines of this pandemic — those incredible folks across the territory who haven't wavered in their support of communities and who have never stopped working to protect Yukoners.

From the office of the chief medical officer of health and staff to a myriad of medical professionals — the people providing the screening, the vaccinations, the tracing, the testing, the cleaning staff, and others — Yukoners offer you our thanks. From exhaustion and stress to injuries caused by thousands of repetitive motions, we know the impact that this has had on so many of these workers. We are proud and thankful for that well-oiled machine that greets us at the convention centre in Whitehorse. I am certain that it is equally well-oiled in every community where vaccine teams continue to travel and offer their support.

Thank you to all of those working to take care of us. I still think that Dr. Bonnie Henry's advice is the best: Be kind, be calm, be safe.

Applause

In recognition of Yukon permanent art collection

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the 40th anniversary of the Yukon permanent art collection, with a special shout-out to Garnet and Tamika if you are listening.

In 1981, a passionate group of Yukoners known then as the "friends of the gallery" and today as the "friends of the permanent art collection" saw the need to preserve, honour, and share the exceptional artwork being produced here in the territory. The group's first two acquisitions on behalf of Yukoners were by Lilius Farley and Ted Harrison, both cherished mentors and early champions of the concept of a permanent government collection. The collection has since grown to over 500 works by over 275 artists. Works can be found in over 30 locations throughout the Yukon and in special curated exhibitions and loans to other institutions.

The Yukon permanent art collection serves as a record of visual arts development in the Yukon and tells many stories. The styles and subject matters are as wide-ranging as Yukon experiences, cultures, and landscapes. They reflect connections to the land and place across time and seasons and over generations of artists, some from the same families.

The artwork also reveals the rich, creative environment that the Yukon offers. Whether it's through painting, photography, sculpture, textile, installation, and more, the collection is reflective of artists and regions across the territory. Great care has been taken to ensure a strong survey of First Nation traditional and contemporary art and fine craft, such as sewing, beading, carving, weaving, and regalia.

As a result, works from world-renowned artists such as Ted Harrison, A.Y. Jackson, and Edward Burtynsky are in great company with beloved elder artists and knowledge-keepers such as Annie Smith, Pearl Keenan, Marge Jackson, Fanny Charlie, Mary de Guerre, and Kitty Smith.

To mark the 40th anniversary of the Yukon permanent art collection, a retrospective exhibition opens next week at the Yukon Arts Centre, entitled *Collective Memory*. The exhibition features an extensive collection of works from the past four decades highlighting the collection's depth and diversity. I invite all Yukoners to visit the show and immerse themselves in the richness of Yukon art and artists. Digital content will also roll out, with much of the collection available for viewing online at foypac.ca.

I want to thank all artists across the Yukon for sharing your talent and voices and enriching our lives. Your work encapsulates the experiences of the Yukon and inspires new generations of Yukon artists. I also want to acknowledge the founders, curators, board members, and the many patrons and community partners over the past 40 years who have been instrumental in the success of the collection. This expansive and creative record offers us a meaningful opportunity to discover, witness, engage, and reflect.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the 40th anniversary of the Yukon permanent art collection.

We are so blessed in Yukon to have many visual artists who are willing to showcase their work. I am thankful that we have a group, Friends of the Yukon Permanent Art Collection, that actively encourages everyone to be engaged and involved. These friends are a charitable, non-profit group that encourages all visual artists to submit their artwork to be considered to be selected for the collection. Donations are also reviewed under the same process and will be regarded for inclusion as well.

As was mentioned, the collection has over 500 pieces and continues to be a growing concern — amazing works of art that portray the legacy of our time and talent through the decades.

Speaking of "permanent", we still need a permanent home for the whole collection so that it can give the artists another venue to be recognized and for the program to become better known and also so that it can be appreciated by all who visit. Think about schools and university classes, visitors and art

classes who would all benefit by seeing all the works under one roof as opposed to being stored away or in various locations.

Many artists have successfully completed the eight-month foundation year at the Yukon School of Visual Arts, or SOVA, in Dawson City. This is equivalent to the first year of a bachelor of fine arts, a BFA. A student that can then transfer to another school to begin their second year.

If you have not done so, please check out the website of the art collection and see the variety. It's thought-provoking, traditional, and there are so many types of art that are to be treasured. Also check out the details for the next intake of art. The 2021 call-in is on January 31, 2022. Please get your application and photos to the panel for consideration. Perhaps you will become part of the permanent art collection for generations of Yukoners to enjoy.

Applause

Ms. Blake: I rise on behalf of the NDP to pay tribute to the Yukon permanent art collection. For 40 years, the Yukon permanent art collection has been developing and growing year after year to honour artists from Yukon's artistic community. The permanent art collection encompasses art from hundreds of Yukon artists, including our young and emerging artists from across the territory. Each piece of art within the permanent art collection forever captures elements of Yukon's history and identity, cultural legacy, landscape, children and families, communities, and celebrations.

The captions of the Yukon are wrapped in vibrant colours of paint strokes and portraits, perfectly stitched in beads, wrapped in hide, and fine lines etched in carvings and weaving. Each piece of art tells a story and reminds us that there are many ways to view and interpret the world around us while sparking a variety of conversations.

Art has the spell to take to you to a special moment in time as it stirs a memory or a moment that you unknowingly keep tucked away in memory. I had the opportunity to tour the permanent art collection this past summer with the incredible staff who are so passionate about their work. This was evident in the stories that they shared about how their work takes them on a journey as they oversee artwork within government buildings across the city, deciding what art pieces are exhibited from the collection to complement each unique space.

At the end of my tour, I was provided an opportunity to view Gwitchin artwork. I watched with curiosity as a big white box was selected off the shelf. The lid was removed from the box, and the smell of home-tanned hide quickly filled the air. A visual display of an intricate stitching of beads began to show itself. In the box was a pair of slippers beaded by Vuntut Gwitchin's respected elder, the late Fanny Charlie.

As we looked at the slippers, I visualized Fanny's hard-working hands, her gentle smile, and all of the many homemade products that she had created over the years for her many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. What began 40 years ago with art shows in a small meeting room in the old public library has grown to be a true Yukon treasure.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have for tabling today a report from Efficiency Canada, which is the scorecard for the Yukon on our efficiency work.

I also have for tabling today a news release from Yukon Energy on their 2021 rate change that was put out today.

Ms. White: Today I have for tabling two documents inviting folks to join the Premier and three of his Cabinet ministers to a political fundraiser in Vancouver on December 18.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees? Are there any petitions to be presented?

PETITIONS

Petition No. 8

Ms. Tredger: I have for tabling the following petition that reads:

THAT the Yukon is in a housing crisis

THAT tenants in the Yukon have little to no protection from evictions

THAT limited vacancy and unaffordable market rates leave Yukoners who rent and prospective renters in a precarious situation

THAT landlords in the Yukon are currently allowed to evict tenants without cause under the current legislation

THEREFORE, the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Yukon to issue an Order in Council which would temporarily prevent evictions *without* provision of cause until such time as the Residential Landlord and Tenant Act can be reviewed.

I would note that this petition has over 160 signatures as well as over 300 signatures online.

Speaker: Are there any bills to be introduced? Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Kent: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Premier to contact the Deputy Prime Minister of Canada to discuss challenges in permitting delays associated with mining projects in Yukon, as created by the Yukon and federal governments.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to table the annual Yukon Minerals Advisory Board report before the end of 2021 Fall Sitting.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to provide an update on the installation of turning

lights at the junction of Robert Service Way and the Alaska Highway before the end of the 2021 Fall Sitting.

Ms. Clarke: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to respond to all written questions tabled during the 2021 Spring Sitting prior to the adjournment of the 2021 Fall Sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Cathers: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to improve safety in the area near the intersection of the Mayo Road and the Alaska Highway, including installing a larger “Keep right except to pass” sign, a larger stop sign, and signs explaining the intended traffic pattern.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the chair of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges to call for debate Motion respecting Committee Reports No. 1 prior to the end of the 2021 Fall Sitting.

Mr. Hassard: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to provide the information regarding the Nisutlin Bay bridge that was promised during Committee of the Whole earlier in this current Sitting.

Ms. Blake: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to advance health system transformation by working with the Yukon Medical Association to create the position of Yukon territorial medical director.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to follow the recommendations of the Yukon Medical Association and other community organizations by implementing a managed alcohol program for vulnerable Yukoners with severe alcohol use disorders.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to respect Yukon Medical Association’s recommendations and follow the government’s own 2018 opioid action plan by making opioid agonist therapies available in Yukon communities.

Ms. White: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce amendments to the *Elections Act* that ban financial and in-kind donations to Yukon political parties from corporations, labour unions, and any other source than individuals residing in the Yukon.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Yukon electricity rates

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We know that electricity bills make a big difference in the lives of Yukoners and Yukon businesses. This morning, Yukon Energy put out a news release regarding upcoming electricity rates, and I would like to update Yukoners on what this will mean for them.

In November 2020, the Yukon Energy Corporation filed an application with the Yukon Utilities Board to increase its electricity rate. This was due to two major challenges that the Yukon Energy Corporation faced: continuing growth and demand for electricity in the territory and the Yukon’s aging electrical system.

First, the continuing increase in peak demands for electricity grew by 17 percent between 2018 and 2020, and it is expected to rise another 40 percent by 2030.

Second, parts of the Yukon’s electrical system are now over 60 years old and need repairs and upgrades in order to support the expected growth and pressure on our electrical system. Upgrades to our electrical system are needed over time, and these upgrades are paid for through our rates.

Yukoners depend on electricity to power and heat their homes. So, one of the things that the Yukon Energy Corporation is doing to ensure that rate increase impacts are softened for Yukoners is timing them to align with other charges being removed. This will effectively keep our bills the same.

For example, the first stage of Yukon Energy’s 2021 rate increase was applied to electricity bills on July 1, 2021. On the same day, other charges came off of our electricity bills. The net impact of that change was near zero. The average residential electricity bill stayed the same while bills for typical business customers went down slightly.

The second stage of the rate increase will be applied tomorrow. At the same time, Yukon Energy’s 2017-18 general rate application true-up will be removed. The net impact of this change is again expected to be zero for residential and business customers and thus no change to what we pay for electricity after December 1.

This careful approach that Yukon Energy is taking provides Yukoners with bill stability and has kept electricity rates in the Yukon the lowest in the north.

This is a win-win for Yukoners. There are no additional increases to electric bills, and we will now benefit from critical investments being made into our electrical system. We will continue to work alongside the Yukon Energy Corporation to ensure that we are making these investments into our electrical system that will support the growing demand for electricity in the Yukon while ensuring that power for Yukon remains at an affordable price.

Mr. Hassard: As temperatures hover between minus 20 and minus 30 degrees in many parts of the territory, and as we head into the darkest days of the year, Yukoners will be

interested to know what is happening with their electrical rates this winter. It is important to note that if it were not for this rate application, Yukoners' power rates would actually be going down this year. So, to be clear, in actuality, our energy bills would have gone down this year were it not for this rate application to keep them as high as they are.

To quote from the Yukon Energy website about what drives power rates: "Renting diesel generators each winter to protect Yukoners from prolonged power outages in case one of our large hydro units or transmission lines break has also contributed to higher annual operating costs."

So, can the minister update us on how many diesel generators will be rented this winter? As you know, Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government spent nearly \$600,000 consulting on a new permanent LNG plant, which they pulled the plug on in 2019. A significant amount of the cost associated with this planning all occurred under the Liberals, which eventually will be included in another rate hike.

Yukoners know that we need dependable backup in case of a major malfunction at one of our hydro stations. We are already at an energy cliff here in the territory. That is why it was short-sighted for the Liberals to abandon the plans for a new LNG generation facility. According to transcripts from the Yukon Utilities Board hearing on this rate hike from September 29, if the Liberals had not pulled the plug on this new LNG facility, the territory would be on track to have it constructed by 2023. Instead, we are stuck renting diesel generators until 2028 or 2029. Even then, the Liberals have not offered a realistic plan to actually end their addiction to rented diesels.

While the new LNG facility would have allowed the territory to phase off of rented diesels in less than two years from now, the Liberal plan unfortunately keeps us on them for potentially another decade. This is certainly unfortunate for the environment of the Yukon.

Further, as you know, Mr. Speaker, with rented diesels, at the end of the day, Yukoners are just shipping money south and none of the assets or benefits stay here in the Yukon.

I do have a question for the minister about his comments on small, modular nuclear reactors this morning, though. Can the minister elaborate a bit more on the feasibility of these in the Yukon? What would be the estimated cost for the territory, and when does he anticipate making a decision on nuclear power here in the territory?

Finally, when does the minister anticipate going forward for another rate hike?

Ms. Tredger: The Yukon NDP are happy to hear that Yukoners' electricity bills will not be going up. The minister has talked about Yukoners needing bill stability and we agree, but it is more than stability — Yukoners need affordability. This does not only apply to electrical bills. Yukoners face many rising costs — Internet and housing, to name a few. We urge the government to find solutions that will keep all aspects of living in the Yukon affordable for everyone.

Today's announcement also speaks to the climate crisis that we are facing. We are in a time when the electrical system

plays a key role in reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. Demand is going up and our infrastructure is aging. These are not problems that we can expect ratepayers to bear alone. It is the government's responsibility to create climate solutions for our territory, and it is the government's responsibility to make sure that all Yukoners have access to clean, affordable, and reliable energy.

It is not an easy task to keep costs low at the same time as making the investments needed to see us through a climate crisis. It will take political will and creativity to make it happen. We look forward to being part of the solution.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I will respond to the Official Opposition. When the member stood up and he talked about how they are recommending that we build an LNG plant — that is liquified natural gas — just a reminder that it is a fossil fuel. Diesel is a fossil fuel; these are fossil fuels. We need to move off of fossil fuels. No, we don't want to build another plant. Yes, we are renting diesels because it won't commit us to them for the long term. That is great; that is smart.

In fact, the Yukon Energy president, Mr. Andrew Hall, was here as a witness and he said that the levelized cost of capacity — and I quote: "So, if you look at the cost of renting — the numbers that we presented in the battery hearing, when there was full transparency on those different options compared — the cost of rental was \$211 per kilowatt year. That's the metric that gets used. The cost of the most recent diesel plant analysis that we did, which was a 12.5-megawatt facility, ended up at \$212 per kilowatt year." So, it's a mistake to build a fossil fuel plant. I will keep saying it. I am happy to rise and keep saying it.

By the way, the plant — the increase to our electricity rates is here because the Yukon Party didn't bring in rate increases since 2013. When the minister landed — the previous Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources — he saw that there was a credit card bill racked up, including the LNG plant which didn't go to rates, so it did have to go to rates. That's when rates jumped. Today, rates are staying the same.

The Member for Porter Creek North, when she stood up on a ministerial statement last month, said that it's going to go up 11.5 percent here under us. No, it's zero percent. That's what it is today. I am very happy for Yukoners.

We think that it is wrong to hold off putting out rates, which the Yukon Party ran on, saying that they were not going to do that because they want to hold off. Then it's a big shock. No, we don't want to shock the system. It is a mistake.

By the way, what I can say is that we're going forward with a grid-scale battery, which we are investing in, so that the ratepayer doesn't have to pay as much. That grid-scale battery will take away from diesels having to deal with the peaks, and it will remove the need for four diesels. It is a great news story today for Yukoners. We are very excited to see that our rates are staying the same while we invest in the future of our electrical, renewable infrastructure here for the territory.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: COVID-19 vaccination requirement rollout

Mr. Dixon: Today is the last day before the Liberals' vaccine mandate and verification system comes into force. By today, government employees will have to sign an attestation form declaring their vaccination status. If they haven't received a first dose by today, they will be put on leave without pay. Given that the deadline is just a few hours away, I expect that the government should have a good idea of how many staff this will impact.

Based on the attestation forms to date and the information received so far, can the minister tell us how many staff this will affect?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The deadline is midnight tonight. I encourage all public service employees to please fill out their attestation.

The numbers that I heard, as of this morning, were that 91 percent of our employees had filled out their attestations. We have been getting numbers in every day, so I'm sure that there will be more today. I will be able to give a final number sometime tomorrow.

I note that there are a handful of employees — 30 or 35 — who have applied for exemptions, so we will need to work through those. So, I'm unable to give a final answer for the member at the moment, but I can say that, of course, the majority of Yukon public servants have filled out their attestation as of first thing this morning.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister committing to get us an answer by tomorrow. I would note that, based on what he said so far, nine percent of the workforce of the Yukon government has yet to do a form, and that's a fairly large number.

This reduction of employees will affect government services. We have heard of impacts on the availability of highway truck drivers who keep our roads safe and of community-specific concerns, like the impact on a community like Ross River that has a lower than average vaccination rate.

We have heard that, in Ross River starting tomorrow, the community could be underserved for EMS, fire protection, home care, and in their school.

Can the minister tell us what plans are in place across the Yukon and government-wide to reduce the impacts of service reductions that will come about as a result of this policy?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Again, I note that employees have until the end of the day today to complete their attestation for their first dose or to submit an exemption request. I encourage those who have not yet attested to their vaccine status to do so as soon as possible. We continue to encourage all of our public servants to get vaccinated, and those who haven't attested or received their first dose by the deadline will have the opportunity to do so and return to the workplace after tomorrow.

I can say that there is a business continuity plan at work across each and every department. The Public Service Commission works with each of those departments to talk through where pressures are noted. This is not that different, in

a sense, from when we first hit the pandemic and we lost some public servants, both in terms of work from home and of health. We have some experience at this now.

I know that the public service has been working with — I think we would have to talk to each individual department to discuss how those strategies are in place, but my understanding is that they have been working on them. We will adjust, as necessary, to support all of our communities.

Mr. Dixon: One specific concern that we have raised with the vaccination verification system is that it is unfairly rigid for kids who are just turning 12. The regulation that was published this morning reads that a child turning 12 will be unable to play organized sports until they get two doses of the vaccine, plus two weeks. This means that, for any child having their 12th birthday in the next few months, they will be unable to play organized sports for 10 weeks after their birthday.

Both the Minister of Education and the CMOH yesterday have committed to adjusting the regulation to fix this; however, as of now, the regulation that was signed just yesterday and published this morning has not yet been fixed.

Will the government commit to fixing this discrepancy immediately so that any child who turns 12 tomorrow or beyond will not be unfairly punished?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am pleased to rise to answer this question today.

The Transport Canada provisions are for travel here in Canada with respect to the application to 12-year-olds, which includes the concept that 12-year-olds plus a four-month period of time after their birthday is permissible so that they can have the time to achieve and receive vaccines during that period of time, and they are not exempt from travel.

It is the same concept that we will adopt here in the territory so that 12-year-olds, plus four months following their birthday, will have the opportunity to get their vaccine at that time, but they will not be prohibited from those activities during that period of time.

Question re: Midwifery legislation

Ms. Clarke: The International Confederation of Midwives is an international body representing midwives across 124 countries. Yesterday, this international body criticized the Yukon Liberal government for their handling of midwifery regulations. The Liberals created a gap in women's health care services when they brought in midwifery regulations. Now, for the first time in decades, there is not a single practising midwife in the Yukon.

Will the Liberals admit that they bungled this policy, and will they immediately make changes so that women can have access to midwives again?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It won't surprise the member opposite that I will not agree with her and I will not concede that we bungled anything. Quite frankly, 14 years of a Yukon Party government did not deal with the midwifery issue and did not even lift a pen to make this a reality for Yukon families.

Health and Social Services continues to work actively with local and national experts, health system professionals, and Yukon First Nation partners to develop Yukon's midwifery

program and to support its integration into our health care system.

Every jurisdiction in Canada had the requirement to introduce regulations and then create a short gap for the opportunity for their programs to be developed, including the staffing and hiring of midwives with appropriate and professional skills to serve the community. That is what we are doing here in the Yukon Territory as well.

Two interim midwife consultants were hired back in November 2020 to provide necessary expertise and to develop and integrate Yukon's midwifery program. I look forward to providing more information about this important program at the next question.

Ms. Clarke: The Liberal government dropped the ball on midwifery regulations and they now have the distinction of being criticized by the international body that represents midwives. To quote from the International Confederation of Midwives speaking about the Yukon — and I quote: "... this is a tragic gap that should have been strategically avoided in Yukon.

"Midwives' education & training is paramount, but nothing should interfere with women's access to care."

So, will the Liberals immediately close this gap?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I suppose the short answer to that question is yes. The Yukon government is working with our midwifery consultants who were hired here to help us develop and implement this program. They are both registered midwives — or at the time were both registered midwives and were providing midwifery integration expertise into implementation and budget planning, as well as the development of a changed management plan, a clinic establishment plan, and other key priority actions.

The Yukon Hospital Corporation is working with us as we develop a variety of policies, as are they, to incorporate midwives into the practice at the hospital here in the territory. They are amending the medical staffing bylaws to incorporate midwives and to ensure that midwives are able to work to the full scope of their practice as primary health care providers for their maternity clients. In addition, we have a midwife integration committee, chaired by Health and Social Services, in support of the integration of midwifery services in the community setting. The committee includes a number of representatives that I will be happy to tell you about in a moment.

Question re: Political party fundraising

Ms. White: According to the Yukon lobbyist registry — and I quote: "Lobbying is when a person or organization communicates with a public office holder, either directly or by means of grassroots communication, for the purpose of attempting to influence the outcome of a government decision." This includes in-person meetings and formal or informal encounters.

On December 18, the Premier will sell access to himself and part of his Cabinet at a private, ticketed event at a Vancouver Canucks game. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier ensure that all attendees are registered with the government

lobbyist registry, or does he believe that fundraisers with corporate representatives do not count as lobbying?

Hon. Mr. Silver: What I am very excited about is that this government knew that it was very important to create the lobbyist registry. We did that. We encourage anybody whom we speak to, if they are going to lobby any government official, to register. The onus, as the members opposite know, is on the individuals, the businesses, and the lobby groups to do so. We absolutely encourage any business organization that has face time with ministers to register as lobbyists. We will always encourage those folks to make sure that they know what the rules are and follow those rules.

Ms. White: It is interesting because in 2014, the Premier was very critical of the Yukon Party harbour cruise, but I guess it's okay if it's the Liberals and it's a hockey game.

Admirably, neither the Premier nor any of his ministers have filed a travel expense since the pandemic began. They haven't travelled to any conferences or meetings outside the Yukon, and none of them have travelled to the COP 26 or anywhere else in the interest of Yukoners for almost two years. It has been 635 days since the last time a Yukon minister travelled to advance Yukon's interests, but now, right when the new Omicron variant is entering Canada, the Premier and three of his ministers are travelling for a political fundraiser. This appears as a classic case of "Do as I say and not as I do".

Does the Premier think that a large gathering in Vancouver to fundraise for his political party is a good reason to travel right now?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the member opposite, she is incorrect. There has been travel by our ministers.

I also want to let people know that, as we travel, we will be absolutely safe; we will be respectful in travelling into jurisdictions, recognizing and understanding other jurisdictions' rules and procedures when it comes to fighting COVID. We all, on this side of the Legislative Assembly, have shown our proof of vaccination. We are all vaccinated and ready to go. Again, we will make sure that, as we travel, we will travel respectfully.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate that the Premier hasn't touched his Vancouver Canucks game or the fundraiser happening on December 18.

We know that the Premier has been hosting these types of events for years — events where the Premier and his ministers can rub shoulders with mining executives and other special interest groups. The Premier recently said in this House that he intends to keep hosting exclusive and unreported meetings outside of the Yukon. Yukoners are questioning how many private, unreported, and unregistered meetings the Premier and his ministers have been having with mining executives since they first exploited this loophole in 2016. The reason, Mr. Speaker, is because it's the real question: Was the decision to exclude the mining industry from emissions targets made at one of these political fundraising events?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting that, when the federal union fundraising dried up in NDP land, all of

a sudden they had a greater interest in all of the other fundraising.

Mr. Speaker, here is the importance of a lobbyist registry. The previous government did not have one in place; we did. We put that in place to make sure that Yukoners knew who was meeting whom and that registration is now up and available and ready. It is something that the other party would not commit to. We did.

Again, when it comes to our fundraising efforts, we are not piggybacking off of other trips where we are supposed to be responsible for things, like Roundup, as the previous government did, and then basically say that you can't meet with the minister unless you are on our yacht. We will be heading down on our own, paying for our own tickets, and doing our own political party fundraising.

Question re: Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport reopening of international travel

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, on November 2, Canada announced that 10 additional airports would be permitted to allow flights carrying international passengers. The press release indicates that consideration would be given to adding additional airports and will involve discussions with territorial governments. Following up, the minister indicated that he was unaware of any discussions with Canada about our international airport. Is he able to tell us now if there have been any discussions between the Yukon and Canada about Whitehorse welcoming international travellers?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. After the Member for Porter Creek North asked me that question a few weeks ago, I went to my officials at Highways and Public Works and asked them about this. Discussions are ongoing with the federal government and Transport Canada. I have a good working relationship with newly reappointed Minister Alghabra. After the session finishes, I will certainly have a meeting with him in his new mandate.

As I said a number of weeks ago, Whitehorse was not on the first list — well, there were the major hubs. There were four major international hubs and then it expanded to another four to six hubs. It is certainly expected — and we see no particular reason why Whitehorse will not be included as a destination for international flights in advance of the spring and early summer of 2022 in time to accommodate any international flights that may occur. We certainly look forward to welcoming Condor back — and any other European air travel providers that may be coming. The Minister of Tourism and Culture is doing yeoman's work on that file.

Ms. Van Bibber: In mentioning Condor, they are currently advertising direct flights to Whitehorse beginning in May. Transport Canada has indicated that they are implementing safety and screening measures at airports that would welcome international passengers.

So, since Condor is already booking flights to come to the Yukon, can the minister tell us if our airport will be ready to accept these passengers come May?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I thank the Member for Porter Creek North for just identifying — yes, our department has been in contact with Condor. Again, their impact is so significant to the Yukon. The travellers who come from German-speaking Europe, of course, are the biggest spenders of all tourists who come to the Yukon. We have continued to be in contact. I believe that the Yukon also, within that working group with the Canada Border Services Agency, has been identifying not only the issue of ensuring that our airport is ready, but also, I am working with my colleague from Highways and Public Works around the fact that we want to ensure that we can expedite the processes at our land borders, as well, going into the spring of this year.

Of course, this is a live subject for anybody who had an opportunity to watch the national news today and the discussions that are happening. Certainly, we are watching even our first tier 1 airports — how they are dealing with international travel and how testing protocols are being used.

Again, we will continue to update the House, but we feel very good about this spring and summer and our international travel coming back.

Question re: Forestry industry

Ms. McLeod: During the 2016 election, the Yukon Liberal Party committed to developing a forestry plan for southeast Yukon. As far as we can tell, there has been no action taken on this commitment.

Can the minister tell us what plans are in place to encourage the development of a healthy forest industry in southeast Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Just a couple of days ago when I rose in this House, I talked about Quill Creek. In my remarks that day, I talked about having raised this question for the Yukon Forum. I have also put in calls and have had conversations with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Carcross/Tagish First Nation. I know that we have signed off on the *Whitehorse and Southern Lakes Forest Resources Management Plan*. I will be sure to get more information for the member opposite.

Question re: Economic development fund

Ms. Van Bibber: A number of Yukon businesses have raised concerns about the new economic development fund and how it has interfered in the normal competition of the marketplace. While we are supportive of funding programs that enhance or stimulate economic opportunities in our economy, we are concerned by the issues that we have seen with this new fund. Businesses should not have to compete against other businesses that are unfairly supported with taxpayer funding.

Can the minister agree to review the policies of the new economic development fund to ensure that government does not unduly interfere in the marketplace and create unfair advantages for some local businesses over others?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I am happy to rise today to talk about our economic development fund. First of all, of course, this was driven by the private sector. We went out to a consultation on how we could improve our programs. We went out to chambers

across the Yukon as well, to the business community, and their response was that they wanted us to make sure that our processes could not just cover some of our standard O&M pieces, but also that we would be able to inject into capital sometimes.

There has been an overwhelming response to the fund — the first one. We thought that we were very transparent.

We rolled out all of the successful applicants. Certainly, there has been some concern — I would say minimal. We have heard from the business sector. I have reached out to the department and asked them to ensure that our processes going forward take into consideration that we are very clear that we are not adding any supports unfairly to one part of a sector that already has competitors in that sector.

Again, we raised this as soon as it was rolled out. I think that we can do better, but I think that we're on the right track and we're on the track that the business sector asked us to be on.

Question re: Youth Panel on Climate Change recommendations

Ms. Tredger: With flooding, mudslides, and entire roadways breaking off from coast to coast, the climate crisis is on everyone's mind. Looking at what our neighbours down south are going through, lots of Yukoners are feeling the urgency of the climate crisis. Young Yukoners especially are feeling anxiety, anger, and grief. Just weeks ago, the Youth Panel on Climate Change released a report that summed it up. It's because of government inaction that we have ended up here, and it is government inaction that is going to make things worse.

If the minister truly believes that this is a crisis, will he commit in this House to implementing every recommendation from the Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Again, I would like to thank the Youth Panel on Climate Change for their incredible diligence. I had the opportunity to go and speak at F.H. Collins school the other day. I think that it was a couple of classes; there were 30 or so students in the room. One of them happened to be the co-chair of the Youth Panel on Climate Change. I was there to talk about climate change and the urgency of the issue and how important it was that we move ahead on addressing climate change, both in terms of reducing our emissions and shifting our energy economy, which we have set at 45 percent to 2030 as our target, and also adapting and making sure that we reduce the risks to Yukoners in the face of a changing climate.

What we've said — and I think that this was even a suggestion by the Third Party — that we make sure to put a climate lens on all things that we do. I have heard the Minister of Highways and Public Works in Committee of the Whole stand up and talk about the importance of that climate change lens, and we will, of course, also put that same climate change lens on the suggestions from the Youth Panel on Climate Change and will prioritize those recommendations that they have given us, which will help us to address the climate crisis first and foremost.

So, again, thank you so much to that panel — really terrific work that they did. I'm looking forward to working —

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Tredger: The minister loves to thank the Yukon youth panel, but now we have to actually implement the recommendations. I worry that the minister doesn't understand that it is his government that has to act on climate change, not youth.

On CBC, the Minister of Environment even encouraged Yukon youths to — and I quote — “nag” their parents about climate change. So, in the same vein, here I am nagging the ministers. What will it take for the minister to actually implement all of the youth panel's recommendations?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I think I stood up earlier today and talked about Yukon Energy and our work on renewables. I said that, no, we disagree with the Official Opposition's position on building another liquefied natural gas plant or a diesel plant. We think that it is the wrong direction to go. We are investing. I talked about grid-scale battery. We could talk about Haeckel Hill wind, and we could talk about the Dawson solar project or the Old Crow solar project. These are all things that we're investing in.

I sat down earlier this morning and got a report from the Minister of Environment on the actions and our follow-up on *Our Clean Future*. We are taking this seriously. We are working diligently. This is the right thing to do.

I have just stood up and said that we will prioritize those recommendations from the youth panel that focus on the solutions to climate change. So, I think that this is a great place to work and start. That's what I said to the youth when we sat down and met with them; that's what I said to them when I met with them the other day in F.H. Collins school. That's what I'm saying here in the Legislature. I agree with the member opposite that we need to prioritize because this is an emergency.

Ms. Tredger: It is not surprising that the minister won't fully accept the Yukon youth panel's recommendations because the youth panel recommended prohibiting corporate donations to political parties. One youth even said — quote: “The idea that a mining company can give money to a government and then the government is expected to regulate that company doesn't make sense to me.”

The conflict is obvious when mining is given special treatment with intensity-based targets instead of overall reductions like every other industry. It is hard to believe that the thousands of dollars in donations that the Liberal Party is getting from mining companies is not influencing their decisions on climate change.

Why did the minister decide to give his party's biggest funders a free pass on emissions targets?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will share that, back when I was not a member of this Legislative Assembly — in fact, when I had affiliations with other political parties — I was asked by the then-government of the day to come in and give them a critique on their climate change strategy.

The first thing that I pointed out to them was that they had nothing on transportation, which dealt with 50 percent of the

emissions, and then I pointed out to them the problem with mining, because it is sometimes a lot of mining and sometimes not a lot of mining. In fact, if we put in place those targets that the member across is asking for, I could end up in the perverse situation where we would not clean up Faro. So, sorry, no — I think that it is important.

I had that idea long before I ever ran for this House with the Liberals, so it is actually based on the science, as I understand it, and, Mr. Speaker, what I heard the youth say is that we should be careful about union donations as well. I will happily talk about that all day long, so I think that it is important that we look at those things, but I am pointing out, here in the Legislature, that it is not the influence. The issue here is dealing with an industry that will be critical to the solution and that also has times when there is a lot of activity and some when there is not.

Question re: COVID-19 vaccination requirement rollout

Mr. Hassard: So, we have heard today that the vaccine mandate is going to cost the government approximately nine percent of its employees. I asked the question last week and I will ask it again, Mr. Speaker: What is the government going to be doing regarding the loss of employees or the loss of EMS in Ross River?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am happy to be on my feet this afternoon to talk about EMS in Yukon communities. We have, in the face of the vaccine mandate, taken precautions to make sure that our communities have coverage during the coming days. One of those things is that we have added a medevac flight so that people in Ross River can be assured that they can get medical attention, should they need it, if there is a problem in Ross River.

The other thing that I have said publicly is that I have every faith that the people — the volunteers who have dedicated their lives for their community for so long — would step up and actually get the vaccine, and I am quite heartened to see that it is actually happening, Mr. Speaker. So, we will see how this plays out in the next 24 hours.

Mr. Hassard: I am sorry to tell the minister that medevac planes are not going to be the answer if someone has a medical emergency in Ross River and there are no EMS workers.

Another question that I asked last week was about home care workers. We note that, as of tomorrow, there will be no home care workers in the community of Ross River. The question for the government is: What will they be doing for those citizens of Ross River who depend on home care?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am almost positive that I heard the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission mention earlier today in response to a very similar question about how each department has a work plan going forward. I think that it is absolutely critical that we are prepared, as jurisdictions across Canada have had to be, for the implications of the vaccine mandate. I think that we also have to remember that the implications of not having a vaccine mandate also mean

that we have a reduced workforce and that there are challenges there as well.

I heard the minister note that each department has a plan going forward. We will work with employees as we know where and if — I emphasize “if” — there are going to be shortages. We will work with departments and the workers there to provide the services that our communities need.

Mr. Hassard: It’s not a question of “if”; it’s a definite.

The minister talked about each department having a work plan. It would have been nice if the minister had been prepared and actually shared that plan about what is going to happen regarding home care for the citizens of Ross River, but apparently she is not as prepared as she claims everyone else is.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is for the Premier. I would like to know if he has talked to Chief Jack Caesar about how this mandate is going to affect the community of Ross River moving forward.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yes, I have talked with the Chief of the Ross River Dena Council.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed. We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 243

Clerk: Motion No. 243, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(2.01) of the *Human Rights Act*, does designate Judy Hartling as Chief Adjudicator of the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators for a term of three years, effective immediately; and

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(2.01) of the Yukon *Human Rights Act*, does designate Julie Jai as Deputy Chief Adjudicator of the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators for a term of three years, effective immediately.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators consists of 10 members of our Yukon community, one of whom is designated as chief adjudicator and one as deputy chief adjudicator. The term of the previous sitting chief adjudicator expired in May of this year. Judy Hartling, previously the deputy chief adjudicator, has been the acting chief adjudicator since that time and will be now designated upon the passing of this motion as the chief adjudicator. Julie Jai is currently a member of the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators and, following the passage of this motion, will be designated as deputy chief adjudicator. Both Judy Hartling and Julie Jai are dedicated members of our legal and broader Yukon community. They are both excellent leaders and dedicated to their roles on the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the former chair of the adjudication panel, and I urge that all members of this House support this motion and the designations of the chief adjudicator and the deputy chief adjudicator to the human rights panel.

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and we thank the Minister of Justice for bringing forward not only this motion but also Motions No. 244 and 245 that we will be discussing with respect to appointments to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators as well as the Yukon Human Rights Commission. These names went through the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Boards and Committees, on which the Member for Porter Creek North and I are the two members of the Official Opposition. I would like to thank colleagues on that committee because we reached consensus on the names that are being put forward today. I would like to congratulate all of those who are coming into their new roles, thank those who are no longer continuing, and thank everyone who put their name forward for consideration for these opportunities on these two important boards.

Ms. Blake: The Yukon NDP are pleased to support these motions appointing the chief adjudicator and deputy chief adjudicator.

I want to thank Judy Hartling and Julie Jai for accepting these important roles and duties with the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Motion No. 243 agreed to

Motion No. 244

Clerk: Motion No. 244, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 17(1) of the *Human Rights Act*, does appoint Samantha Dawson and Rosemary Rowlands to the Yukon Human Rights Commission for a three-year term, effective immediately; and

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 17(1) of the *Human Rights Act*, does appoint Keely Bass and reappoint Michael Dougherty to the Yukon Human Rights Commission for a three-year term, effective December 11, 2021.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The Human Rights Commission consists of five members. Two are current vacancies there, and there are two member positions that are set to expire on December 10, 2021, so these motions have been brought forward today to deal with those vacancies.

The vacancies were advertised, and members whose terms were ending were notified. The all-party Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees, as my colleague has said, reviewed all of the applications that were received and recommended that

Samantha Dawson, Rosemary Rowlands, and Keely Bass be appointed to the commission and that Michael Dougherty be reappointed to the commission.

Each of the recommended new applicants bring a variety of skills and experience to the panel. I look forward to them being appointed at the passing of this motion and having them bring their expertise to that work.

Samantha Dawson has extensive experience working in the area of aboriginal law and previously served as the northern representative on the Native Women's Association of Canada. Ms. Dawson is the recipient of the Helen Bassett commemorative award for her commitment to improving the status of indigenous women and youth in Canada politically, culturally, and economically.

Rosemary Rowlands has experience in northern indigenous justice and as a Yukon Justice of the Peace and a member of the Yukon Judicial Council.

Keely Bass has experience in inclusion and diversity across many different sectors, both private and public, in British Columbia and the Yukon as well as internationally, and brings a detail-oriented approach to the commission.

Michael Dougherty is currently a member of the Yukon Human Rights Commission and brings a wealth of experience from previously serving on the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators and the Ta'an Kwäch'än First Nation Judicial Council. Michael continues to be very involved in the community, including with the social justice committee at Sacred Heart and the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition and Yukon Cares.

I would like to thank all of those who have put their names forward to serve on the commission. I would also like to thank the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees for their recommendations and careful consideration of all applicants. I urge all members of the House to support this motion and the appointments of Samantha Dawson, Rosemary Rowlands, and Keely Bass and the reappointment of Mr. Dougherty to the Yukon Human Rights Commission.

Ms. Blake: The Yukon NDP are pleased to support these motions appointing these Yukoners to the Yukon Human Rights Commission. We want to thank these individuals for agreeing to serve in these important positions.

Also, a thank you to Michael Dougherty for agreeing to his reappointment and for his previous work on the commission.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Motion No. 244 agreed to

Motion No. 245

Clerk: Motion No. 245, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(2) of the *Human Rights Act*, does reappoint Vincent Larochelle to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators for a term of three years, effective immediately.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I have noted that the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators is comprised of 10 persons — members of our Yukon community. I have also noted that the all-party Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees reviewed applications that were brought forward after advertising this year for a vacancy. The committee has recommended that Vincent Larochelle be appointed as a member of the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators. Mr. Larochelle brings experience and will continue to be an asset on the panel of adjudicators.

I would like to take the opportunity once again to thank all of those who put their names forward, as there were many qualified and outstanding candidates. Thank you to the standing committee for taking the time to make this recommendation, and I urge all members to support this motion.

Ms. Blake: The Yukon NDP are pleased to support this motion reappointing Vincent Larochelle to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators. Thank you for your previous work and for the work ahead.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?
Motion No. 245 agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. Blake): I will now call Committee of the Whole to order. The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 202: *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Health and Social Services — continued

Mr. Cathers: Deputy Chair, as members will recall, when we finished off debate yesterday, during the very brief amount of time that I had yesterday on the floor, I raised the fact that I had, as the Minister of Health and Social Services will recall, written to her in October regarding the desire of a constituent of mine to receive access to the Pfizer vaccine. We had unfortunately seen the situation where the minister took over a month to reply. Again, just to recap, I wrote to her on October 21 in support of a constituent being able to access the Pfizer vaccine and also suggesting that it be made available to any other Yukoners who wish to have the opportunity.

Unfortunately, the minister showed a real lack of urgency in her reply, getting back to me only at 2:47 p.m. last Friday. The response went on to basically deny the request, stating that: “The Moderna vaccine is safe and effective and at this time, the only option for adults in the Yukon. I do however, recommend you let your constituent know to contact their Health Care Provider who will then contact our Immunizations Program to discuss how and if it is possible to proceed with an alternative mRNA COVID-19 vaccine like Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty.”

Then, as I noted, strangely, about three hours later, the Department of Health and Social Services contradicted the minister on Facebook with a post that indicated that they were making vaccine alternatives available to Yukoners, including both the Pfizer vaccine and the Janssen vaccine, commonly referred in the media as “Johnson & Johnson”.

We do support the government making vaccine alternatives to Moderna available. Whether it be a non-mRNA alternative, such as the Janssen vaccine, or the Pfizer vaccine, it is important, in our view, when Yukoners are being strongly encouraged to get vaccinated against COVID, to make options available, because some people do have concerns with specific vaccines. In the interest of increasing those vaccination rates, it does make sense to provide those alternatives.

We are pleased that the government has finally relented on this issue and agreed to allow Yukoners to access Pfizer, or the Johnson & Johnson, vaccine, but as we have touched on — and the Third Party has also noted — the communication about this by government has been exceptionally bad. Whether it was the minister and the department contradicting each other within just hours last Friday or the fact that, while the government has announced many things through press releases and press conferences pertaining to COVID, at this point, the announcement of the vaccine alternatives being made available seems to have largely been on social media. We have noted, as well, that media reporters have also noted the poor rollout of the information about this.

Knowing that — based on the information made available last Friday by the Department of Health and Social Services in a Facebook post at 5:49 p.m. — alternatives were being made available in Whitehorse yesterday and today, that doesn't provide a lot of clarity about future opportunities for accessing these vaccine alternatives.

I would ask three questions: One, are there additional dates when these vaccine alternatives will be made available within the Whitehorse area, and what will those dates be, or when will they be announced? The second question is: What about the availability in rural Yukon of vaccine alternatives? And the third question is: Why did the minister seem so badly disconnected from her department on Friday that she told me one thing early in the afternoon, which was affectively no to the request I had made over a month ago, and the department did the opposite three hours and two minutes later?

I am also going to just touch on a few other areas, recognizing that the minister has a tendency to get up and use the full allowable time, whether or not she is providing any useful information during that time period.

I'm just going to recap a couple of other issues before going on to questions prompted by yesterday. I would note as well — and I will be returning to this later — that over one-fifth of Yukoners are without a family doctor. We have the issue of the continued chronic underfunding of our hospitals — according to their own annual report from the Yukon Hospital Corporation — two years in a row, in a pandemic, with expenses millions higher than revenue.

We also heard, on November 16 when the witnesses appeared from the Hospital Corporation — on page 901 of Hansard from November 16, one of the witnesses noted what the hospital's actual budget was for this year. The witness said — and I quote: "What I can confirm is that the annual budget for fiscal year 2021-22 is \$98.2 million prior to factoring in COVID-19 impacts."

However, as we have heard repeatedly from the minister in the Legislative Assembly, including yesterday, the operation and maintenance amount in the revised budget before this Assembly is just \$85.76 million. There is a big difference between that \$98.2 million that the hospital indicated is their budget for this need and their budgetary requirement for this year and the \$85.7 million in O&M, which, even once you factor in the additional capital amount that's included in this budget, is still millions short of that \$98.2 million that the hospital told us they needed.

Yukoners, even those who are not intimately familiar with reading public accounts and balance sheets, can look at the annual reports of the Hospital Corporation for the last two years and see very clearly that expenses were millions higher than revenues, and this is, of course, in a pandemic. That is not sustainable; it leads to other issues, such as wait times and other areas.

We have also seen the report that came from the Canadian Medical Association this morning talking about the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada in non-COVID areas, including — I believe the number that they cited was an estimated 4,000 deaths in Canada as a result of the pandemic but of people who did not have COVID. That is due to areas such as interventions not happening as quickly as necessary in emergency situations, and they cited issues around diagnoses not happening for conditions where an intervention would have been possible if there had been early diagnosis, but as a result

of the system becoming overwhelmed, there were these cascading impacts across it.

I just want to move to what we heard yesterday during the appearance of the acting chief medical officer of health and his assistant. At the time, I had asked the acting chief medical officer of health about the modelling that they used in making recommendations to government and also about their recommendations to government. As I noted yesterday on page 1103, during the briefing we had earlier this month — quote: "Based on the briefing that we had earlier this month with Dr. Corriveau, we understand that, in recommending the reintroduction of the state of emergency and the other measures that Dr. Corriveau has referred to as the 'circuit breaker', modelling was done that predicted an increase in COVID cases if those measures weren't taken. Now, we have not actually seen that. At the time of the briefing, Dr. Corriveau had indicated that he did have that information but wasn't sure at that point if he was able to share that modelling with us."

Yesterday I asked — and I quote: "Are you in a position at this point where you can share with us some of the modelling that was done that led up to the recommendation of the circuit-breaker measures?"

The doctor indicated in reply — and I quote: "... my view is that it is more appropriate for the member to request it directly from the minister than from me."

I went on at several other periods throughout the appearance of witnesses yesterday to ask about these recommendations, and again, we heard repeatedly from the acting chief medical officer of health that it was quite clear that he didn't have a problem providing those recommendations that he had made to government, to us, but did not feel that it was within his role or his authority to do it — that it was better asked of the minister.

Returning to comments from yesterday, Dr. Corriveau, the acting chief medical officer of health, indicated that additional recommendations had been made. He said — and I quote: "... my recommendations have been put forward, and they will be reviewed, and decisions will be made." That was on page 1100 from the Blues.

I then asked the witness — and I quote: "The witness made reference to having provided recommendations to government regarding that. Can you provide us with any information and elaborate on what the key elements of those recommendations would be?" Dr. Corriveau then replied — and I quote: "I would submit that my recommendations go to the minister, to whom I am accountable. I would rely on the minister to decide when and what she will be sharing in terms of those recommendations."

All of this leads up to the key question. The minister has received recommendations from the acting chief medical officer of health recently, as well as leading up to the government's decision to implement the circuit breaker. We don't know what those recommendations are. It is quite clear that the acting chief medical officer of health had no problem providing that information to members and did not suggest that there was any reason, such as privacy or any other matter, that would prevent him from releasing it. The only thing that

prevents him from releasing it is the minister, and he was quite clear in indicating that his recommendations go to the minister, and it was up to the minister to decide whether to release them or not.

So, the question, again: We have asked for — and the Third Party has asked for — in the past, the recommendations from the chief medical officer of health to be made public. Will the minister agree to do that and, if not, why not?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I clearly understand the criticism that I'm giving answers that are too long. I haven't really had that be a problem before. I'm happy to shorten them up, but when I get on my feet, there are a number of them before me and, rather than sort of three or four separate questions, these are all together. So, I'm going to take the time needed to answer those and, I guess, live with the criticism. Despite the fact that the member opposite doesn't think that I'm giving answers, I truly am, and I know that Yukoners believe that I am.

The situation about the availability of Pfizer for adults and — let me just say it this way: The Janssen/Johnson & Johnson one-dose vaccine is an important opportunity for Yukoners. We have worked with our health system partners here in the territory and across the country to ensure appropriate access to vaccines, and we have done that throughout the pandemic.

The addition of the Moderna, or the SPIKEVAX vaccine, the Pfizer, and the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccines are now available as alternate vaccine options for individuals over the age of 18 here in the territory.

I should note that how this came about — the member opposite should actually know, as he has been a Cabinet minister in the past — and maybe not based on the realities of COVID, but these decisions and these opportunities happen in real time.

We found out late last week that we were going to be receiving copies of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, and ultimately the second important step was that Health Canada was in fact approving them for use in adults. All of that happened very quickly. I think that we only have about 100 doses.

One of the ways in which we communicate to Yukoners, which was the priority when this information came available, was to inform Yukoners that the opportunity was available and that, in particular, they might want to be considering what they might want to do over the weekend. Social media is one of the ways that we do inform Yukoners. That was the priority.

The letter that I wrote — first of all, I don't see it as inconsistent that I wrote to the member opposite with information for his constituent. It does, in fact, say that it wasn't available at the time that it was written and probably was signed a day or so before it was sent to the member opposite. Is that the criticism now? That I signed it on Thursday, perhaps, and it went to him on Friday? I think that Yukoners will think this is a bit ridiculous. The important thing is that the letter is not inconsistent. I indicated in the letter that the individual should contact their medical provider of service and ask them about alternative vaccines. They would have known, or would have been able to ascertain through the new information, that they could possibly have access to that, depending on their needs.

Communication occurs in real time. We have said it many times here. The consideration of what Yukoners might want to do over the weekend was an important one. Making it available over two days immediately was an option because, for people who have been thinking about this, we wanted to make sure that we did it quickly. We also wanted to make sure that it was available for those people who might want to have that as an alternative prior to the end of November so that they might take this vaccine instead of choosing not to go to a workplace or go to a restaurant or whatever might be the issue.

The question that I have been asked — will there be additional dates? Possibly, if there is vaccine available. Absolutely, if all 100 doses are used yesterday and today, then it won't be at the moment, but we will try to obtain more, knowing that there are some Yukoners who prefer that vaccine. There will be some availability in rural settings. Again, if the individuals go to their health centre and request it — and we can get it there as part of a vaccine clinic that is going to be there or get it to their health centre — that could be available. It is certainly not a “no”.

The comments about disconnected or unconnected — or whatever it is that the member opposite thinks that I do in this role — I will just ignore those.

I can confirm that we did only receive 100 doses in a shipment that came very late this month and that we can obtain more.

Just a reminder to all Yukoners, although I know that people are driven by different decisions in their lives, yesterday the acting chief medical officer of health indicated that the mRNA vaccines are preferable to those, if you can take them, which is, I think, a very important piece of information.

I have emphasized that the dates of November 29 and 30 were to allow Yukoners who chose these vaccines over others to obtain them prior to the deadline of a vaccine mandate. These vaccines came recently to our possession here in the territory, and we wanted to make them available prior to the mandate and make them available to all Yukon employees and others who may choose that. I think that I have said that as well.

With respect to the questions about the hospital budget, I think that the short answer is that the \$93 million and change includes the capital expenditures with respect to the O&M and the capital. In addition to the operating and the capital budgets for the hospital, there is \$4.4 million in addition to that for COVID funding, and the hospital and Health and Social Services have indicated — I don't want to try to recall all of the things that the witnesses said when they were here, but the hospital has in the past indicated that Health and Social Services has met all of their requested hospital needs. That question wasn't directly asked, if I recall correctly, when they were here. That is all I will say about that at the moment.

What I can indicate with respect to the modelling is — and there were questions around that. First of all, I need to correct something, Deputy Chair. Certainly, the acting chief medical officer of health said that the question should be directed to me as to whether or not recommendations would be released, or modelling could be released, to members of the opposition. What he did not say — and it has been unfairly characterized

by the member opposite — is that the minister is keeping that information from being released. Certainly, I haven't been asked for it, but I am happy to deal with that issue, and I am very pleased to have had the acting chief medical officer of health here, as well as the medical officer of health here, to answer questions for the members opposite and for all Yukoners. I think that it was a great opportunity.

We do continue to work closely with the office of the chief medical officer of health. Maybe it isn't redundant to say — we have always said the same thing — that we follow the chief medical officer's recommendations, that the decisions guided through COVID-19 here in the last 20 months, soon to be 21 months, have been guided by the recommendations made by the chief medical officer of health and that they have always come to the government with respect to that relationship and the information comes to us for the purposes of making decisions.

The office of the chief medical officer of health continues to work closely, of course, with our department and public health experts here in the territory and across Canada to develop evidence-based responses to the spread and control of COVID-19.

I don't think that the member opposite is alleging that these decisions have been made without evidence or without epidemiology or without modelling. Maybe that is what he is saying.

One of the components used, Deputy Chair, to inform our response is the epidemiology of COVID-19, which provides evidence related to patterns and cases, spreads of disease, effectiveness of measures, and risk factors. This includes, but isn't limited to, looking at demographics, locations of outbreaks in other jurisdictions, the prevalence of COVID-19 variants, and the effects of easing public health measures. Epidemiology and technical reports are prepared daily and reviewed by the office of the chief medical officer of health to inform advice and recommendations.

I don't want to be understood to be saying that we receive recommendations daily; we certainly do not. That is the work that is done daily by the office of the chief medical officer of health.

Based on review of the epidemiology and modelling scenarios for the Yukon and the knowledge of our territorial health system and capacity, the office of the chief medical officer of health makes recommendations meant to ensure the health and safety of Yukoners.

I don't have any issue with the concepts of the modelling or some of that information. I will speak to the chief medical officer of health and the acting chief medical officer of health. I understand that Dr. Elliot has returned to work today, so that will be a decision that she and her team make with respect to the information that they have provided, as well as the recommendations, and take that into consideration in responding to the question by the member opposite.

Modelling has been done and was done to inform the recommendations — I am going to be quite emphatic to say all the recommendations that have ever come forward from the acting or the chief medical officer of health — and they'll

continue to do that by monitoring the epidemiology and doing modelling so that we can understand our path forward.

Mr. Cathers: I want to start, first of all, with the issue of access to vaccine alternatives. Although the minister spent most of her time talking about access to the Janssen vaccine, I would remind her that the letter I wrote her in October, at the same time as the government was urging people to get immunized as quickly as possible, was about allowing Yukoners to access the Pfizer vaccine. The minister, at that point — the person I wrote on behalf of was being told potentially to ask their health care provider and maybe they might get access to it but had not been successful with that.

The request that I made was simply to allow that person and other Yukoners the ability to access the Pfizer vaccine, which I remind the minister was not just recently approved by Health Canada — it was approved by Health Canada late last year and has been used widely across the country and around the globe in adults. The minister sent back a response over a month later dismissing my request, and then, three hours later, her department contradicted her and made the vaccine available to Yukon adults, while also announcing the Janssen vaccine.

I will just, before moving on to the many other topics I do have on my list, point out that the minister suggested that maybe she had signed the letter on Thursday or sometime before, but the date on the letter — which I did table previously, so I won't table it again — was November 26. The date was Friday, the same day the letter was sent, and that same day, the department said the opposite of what the minister did. It does suggest a disconnect and raise serious questions about whether the minister is on top of her files.

We have also heard the minister rise in Question Period, on two separate days, to challenge the Leader of the Official Opposition and me when we pointed out that, according to the government's own numbers, including a letter that the minister signed, over one-fifth of Yukoners don't have a family doctor. The number they have cited is 21 percent, and the minister bizarrely chose to challenge whether 21 percent was over one-fifth of Yukoners.

For those people, whether it is vaccine alternatives or anything else, suggesting that they contact their medical provider when they don't have one is not, with all due respect, a very good solution. We have again seen a lack of action by the minister on actually doing anything to get more family doctors to move to the Yukon. Unfortunately, the talking points are not a substitute for action.

The minister then went on to suggest that she hadn't heard a request before for the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health to be made public. We have made that request multiple times in this House and outside of it. The Third Party has also indicated their support for making those recommendations public, so it suggests a selective memory, at best, for the minister to claim that she wasn't aware of that request.

When the government refuses to release the actual recommendations made by the chief medical officer of health, or the acting CMOH, we don't know what is in those recommendations. We only have the minister's and the

Premier's word about it, but we don't actually see those recommendations. The government should not have anything to hide here. All we are asking, in the interest of public transparency, is that they release all recommendations of the acting CMOH, or the chief medical officer of health, publicly so that Yukoners can see the rationale. What the minister doesn't seem to get is that with unprecedented restrictions and rules should come increased information-sharing, not less.

As we get as far into the pandemic as we are, many Yukoners, along with other Canadians, are becoming frustrated with rules and restrictions when they don't understand the rationale behind them and, in some cases, don't agree with them. One of the best steps that government can do in responding to that is give people the information. Let them understand the data and the rationale upon which decisions are based. In the absence of that, it simply leads to and increases a lack of trust in government and undermines confidence.

Before I miss doing so, I want to again just briefly jump to the hospital funding and point out that the additional money of \$4.4 million that the minister cited for the Yukon Hospital Corporation clearly does not just add onto the amount that is in there in the budget, because — again, I will quote what the witnesses from the hospital told us on November 16 of this year on page 901 of Hansard — and I quote: “What I can confirm is that the annual budget for fiscal year 2021-22 is \$98.2 million prior to factoring COVID-19 impacts.”

The minister is clearly again continuing this government's record of underfunding the Yukon Hospital Corporation and doing so during a pandemic and doing so at a time when over one-fifth of Yukoners are forced to go the hospital if they need to see a doctor, because of the shortage in family doctors here.

I do want to note, as well, that when we talk about more than a fifth of Yukoners not having a family doctor, that is thousands of people. The minister also claimed in this House that we were doing better than the rest of Canada in terms of physicians per population, but that has been shown to be inaccurate. I have tabled in this House a copy of the report from the Canadian Institute for Health Information which shows that, under the Liberal government's watch, the number of physicians per 100,000 population increased in all but one jurisdiction, and that jurisdiction was the Yukon. The Yukon was the only jurisdiction to get worse in terms of physicians per population in the entire country.

While the minister has cited other numbers from *Putting People First*, I would point out that we have heard from members of the Yukon's physician community that not only are those numbers incorrectly cited and inaccurate in *Putting People First*, the Yukon Medical Association has told the government that repeatedly, and the government chooses to keep citing numbers that they have been told by Yukon physicians, and the YMA, are not accurate. The Canadian Institute for Health Information document, as I noted and have tabled in this House, is very clear about the fact that, between 2015 and 2019, there was only one jurisdiction in the entire country to get worse in terms of physicians per population, and that was the Yukon under this Liberal government.

From the narrative of the minister that we have heard in this House, it seemed at times that they are more interested in phasing out family medicine than recruiting doctors. Don't get me wrong: We support more integration and collaboration with expanding the use of other health professions within the system, but there is still a need for family doctors. We see no evidence that the Liberals and this minister are doing more than paying lip service to this important issue.

It's easy to see this issue as not being a crisis if you have a family doctor, but unlike the minister, one-fifth of Yukoners are in a position where they don't.

Deputy Chair, again, we see no evidence of paying more than lip service to the important issue. When we have asked the minister if she can point to a single thing that she has done to encourage more family physicians to move to the Yukon, one of her talking points has been that she had a phone call with the president of the Canadian Medical Association. While it is good that she is talking to the president of the Canadian Medical Association, that in itself is not an accomplishment nor much of an action.

The minister has also talked in this House about a budgeted amount for programs which, as she knows, seems to be just a list of programs started under the Yukon Party, and she has failed to provide a breakdown, despite us requesting it.

The facts are, in terms of areas such as support for students, that the medical education bursary to help Yukon students become educated as a doctor was \$10,000 per student 15 years ago, when I announced it, and now it has been cut to half of that at \$5,000. The government has also reduced the amount that is available for the nursing education bursary by half and the health profession education bursary by half. It is certainly not sending the message that they are serious about supporting Yukon students in becoming educated in health professions. Costs have gone up across the board over the last 15 years. To suggest that it is adequate to provide Yukoners taking health education with half of the amount they got 15 years ago is, quite frankly, laughable, but this is a very serious matter for every Yukoner who does not have access to the health care that they need when they need it.

The minister has told the House, as well, that they spend \$89,000 a year on bursary programs. Comparatively, the government spent, I believe it was, \$120,000 in Dawson spraying water in the air hoping for ice, literally. And, of course, they spent \$1.9 million on the digital monster signs over the highway that many Yukoners would rather see gone.

If you asked any one of the thousands of Yukoners without a family doctor whether they would rather that the government had spent that money on encouraging more doctors to move to the Yukon, what do you think they would say?

This government is clearly out of touch with the needs of Yukoners, and I would ask whether the minister has had a chance to read the Canadian Institute for Health Information report that she repeatedly refers to incorrectly which shows that Yukon is the only jurisdiction that has gotten worse in the country in physicians per population, and will she agree to start taking action?

Can she actually provide us with specifics on anything that this government is doing to actually encourage more family physicians to move to the territory?

My next question on that topic would be about the government's record to date. When was the last time a family doctor moved to the Yukon and started practising here? How many have moved here since 2016 under the Liberals' watch?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm just going to comment on the inappropriate method of debate here. I have no difficulty answering questions — none whatsoever. References to my personal life or my personal health care are so completely inappropriate that it doesn't even bear comment, except to say that. I will put that on the record. Twenty minutes of insults followed by one question is not really my idea of a great debate, but if that's what the member opposite wants to do with his time, then that's fine. I'm sure that Yukoners will make that decision for themselves.

I'm happy to answer the questions that were actually asked — I think were asked — in that preamble.

There is no question that *Putting People First* makes references to 21 percent of Yukoners who don't have access to a physician. Apparently, those figures are okay in the *Putting People First* report and are relied on consistently by the member opposite or his party, but the Canadian Institute of Health Information figure, he says, is incorrect and those are clearly things that are wrong. So, you can't pick and choose.

The *Putting People First* report was done by experts in the field. I assure you that their figures have been relied on by this government, and rightly so.

We have an issue with doctors and physicians. It is incredibly important that we address that and we are doing so in many ways. Again, I have said this over and over here in the House. The member opposite is asking me to list, yet again, some of the activities that are taking place with respect to how we are dealing with that — remembering, of course, all Yukoners, that doctors are independent business people here in the territory. We are working closely with the Yukon Medical Association and other organizations so that we can address what is a national shortage of doctors here in the territory and across the country. Medical professionals are incredibly important. We have seen, during the COVID-19 pandemic, no less than the exacerbated concern and exacerbated reliance that we have on front-line medical professionals of all kinds, not just doctors.

In 2019, our government collaborated with the Yukon Medical Association to launch the "find a doctor" program. This is one piece of evidence of something concrete that we have done to match over 1,000 Yukoners with medical doctors. Is that enough? No. Do we have more to do? Absolutely. To date, over 30 percent of the individuals who have enrolled in the program have received a match. Based on the current wait-list, approximately 5.7 percent of Yukoners have enrolled in the program.

It's clear that the lack of adequate access to primary care providers is a long-standing challenge and has been made more difficult due to COVID-19 and the national and global shortage

of health care providers. Connecting Yukoners to a primary care provider is a priority.

Putting People First is a focus, and the adoption of the recommendations in *Putting People First* is an opportunity for us, as an entire community, to report, expand, and create access to culturally safe person- and family-centred care. That is the goal of *Putting People First*.

Our government has already taken a number of actions to address this important issue while continuing to work with our health system partners to provide better service and move forward with further short-, medium-, and long-term strategies and solutions.

Health care recruitment and retention strategies represent one part of our overall work to support Yukoners to lead healthy and happy lives. Our government has expanded the scope of practice for pharmacists. We have improved access to preventive treatments. We have increased the number of in-territory specialist service providers. In September, we introduced a nurse practitioner to serve Old Crow and Carmacks. We have enhanced funding for prenatal nutrition programming, and we are moving forward with regulated and funded midwifery services.

In 2021-22, we have budgeted \$4.52 million for the Yukon Medical Association to administer 14 physician recruitment and retention initiatives, including their medical student bursary program, the preceptor support program, and the locum support fund. By comparison — the member opposite loves to compare; it's not my favourite thing, but I think it is important information for Yukoners — in 2014-15, Health and Social Services had budgeted \$2.36 million to the Yukon Medical Association for their recruitment and retention initiatives, including the medical student bursary.

I'm not going to comment on the phone call comment. We are working with the Canadian Medical Association and we are working with the Yukon Medical Association on behalf of Yukoners. The members opposite can spin a narrative however they like about how that isn't enough, but Yukoners know that we have their interests in mind, that *Putting People First* is a pathway forward, and that the opportunity for us to work together with our partners will be the way in which we can solve this situation.

The population of the territory is, of course, growing rapidly, and unfortunately the number of new physicians wanting to come to the Yukon has not yet kept pace, but we have an amazing group of medical professionals here in the territory who provide front-line care, who provide services at clinics, who provide the opportunities for Yukoners to have health care and who are dedicated, I know, to making sure that Yukoners have the care that they need and are working together with us going forward.

I have a note that we have two new physicians who have moved to the Yukon so far in 2021. I think that was one of the questions.

I think that the member opposite is misunderstanding my comment about the hospital funding. What I said was that the approximately \$93 million noted includes capital and O&M, and in addition to that, there is \$4.4 million for COVID funding.

I didn't include it; I didn't add 86 and 4 and get to 93. It's capital and O&M equalling approximately \$93 million and \$4.4 million in addition to that.

Maybe this is the more important part. The last quarterly variance figure reported from the Yukon Hospital Corporation to Health and Social Services was \$96 million. To date, we have committed to all of the funds that they have asked for. The repeated comments that the Hospital Corporation is not being properly funded is a disservice to Yukoners. They are not the actual facts of the situation, and it is a disservice to Yukoners. Fortunately, I have the opportunity today to hopefully speak directly to them and say that the Hospital Corporation request of \$96 million for this fiscal year has been met and will be met by this government and by the Department of Health and Social Services in this government because we know how critically important the services provided by the Yukon Hospital Corporation are at all times, but particularly now in relation to dealing with a world pandemic.

We work very closely with Yukon Hospital Corporation and have always ensured that they are fully funded. I don't think that it's of service today for me to go through a listing of figures. That is complicated for people to read, but the information that we have — and the information that is important for Yukoners to know — is that the request from the Yukon Hospital Corporation has, over the last five years, been met with annual increases to include the operating funds that they require.

I hope that I have addressed each of the questions that were put forward.

Mr. Cathers: No matter how the minister tries to spin it — and try she has — the Yukon Hospital Corporation's annual report, which any Yukoner can read for themselves online — or tabled by the minister in this House — shows clearly that, for the last two years, expenses were higher than revenues by millions of dollars. The Hospital Corporation witnesses, when they appeared earlier this month, indicated that "The annual budget for fiscal year 2021-22 is \$98.2 million prior to factoring in COVID-19 impacts." That is a quote right there from page 901 of Hansard.

The minister just stood and told us that the number they needed was less. The total numbers she cites are less than that. The minister likes to argue that black is white and dismiss any criticism or questions she doesn't like as effectively fake news, but the facts are quite clear.

I'm going to move on to other areas here, including pointing out that the minister didn't answer how many family doctors have moved here since 2016. Of course, that is also in comparison to how many have left the territory. The "find a doctor" program doesn't help Yukoners if there are no doctors taking patients. We don't disagree with this program, of course, but it's not really of much use if there aren't doctors taking patients. Again, we still have yet to hear a breakdown from the minister on the actual program there and what they are doing.

I will move on to some other areas, just in the interest of time and the long list of questions that I do have to ask. I would ask the minister what, if anything, they have done as far as trying to get a family doctor to move to Haines Junction, which

has been a long-standing request of that community. I know my colleague, the Member for Kluane, has raised that with the minister before.

I am going to move on to the area of vaccinations. We have heard concerns from constituents, and I raised this previously with the minister: The impact of the COVID-19 vaccine campaigns resulted in — and we do appreciate that the staff are very busy — a cancellation or the suspension of a number of childhood vaccination programs, as well as adult vaccines, such as tetanus and travel vaccinations. We know that there was an interest by pharmacists in working with the government to provide those services. We also know that the pharmacists have had a very frustrating relationship with this minister and this government, including an August 17, 2021 letter that the minister will no doubt have seen, since it was addressed to her. The letter is from the Yukon Pharmacists Association: "We are writing to express our shock and disappointment..."

The letter then goes on to recap some of the things that had been committed to. It goes on. Later in the letter, it references that pharmacy owners negotiated in good faith. It refers to the Yukon government's action — quote: "This is bargaining in bad faith on the part of Yukon Government and is not acceptable."

I will touch on a number of the issues that are noted in this letter. It includes travel vaccinations. Issues include: "Timely and smooth transition for any future publicly funded vaccines" and it is noted as "In progress". "Introduction of a biosimilar process" — these are under the column that indicates whether the proposed change that was agreed to was honoured or not, and the lists that say "Yes", they were honoured, is a lot smaller than the lists that say "No". "Introduction of a biosimilar policy" — no, that was not addressed; "Change to on-line carrier" says "In progress"; "Collaboration regarding additional professional services" — no, it was not honoured; "Medication assessment — discussion to begin January 2021" is noted to be "In progress"; "Transfer of travel vaccines to pharmacy" — no — and it notes that a meeting took place in May of 2021, but there was no further follow-up after that meeting; "IHS will adopt the NIHB supply and OTC price list as of April 1" — no; "New markup in dispensing fee" — no.

It also, later on in the letter, notes the challenge to pharmacies that, based on government operating off the manufacturers' list price instead of the actual acquisition cost, for some medications, pharmacies actually lose money, which, of course, is a disincentive to them actually providing those services.

Now, it is not my intent to advocate or negotiate for the Yukon Pharmacists Association, but it is my intention to note that the things that they indicate that government agreed to — unless the minister is accusing the signatories to this letter of saying something that is not true — they have indicated that government agreed to take certain actions and then failed to follow through, and they used the term "bad faith".

It is important at any time, but no less so in a pandemic, for the government to have a positive and constructive working relationship with health professions and the professional associations. Especially since, in terms of vaccines for both

children and adults that could be made available through pharmacists, which currently government has suspended due to government resources being focused on the COVID vaccine rollout — the fact that the government has such a troubled relationship with Yukon pharmacists at this point is a missed opportunity to do better in terms of the rollout of things including travel vaccines, children's vaccines, and other matters.

So, I would ask the minister if she could provide an update on that and explain why the government has not done a better job of working with Yukon pharmacists. We have heard from a number of people — including my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek Centre, who raised it with me and others — about constituents contacting them, as I have had, with concerns about childhood vaccinations being delayed as a result of government's resources being fully involved in dealing with COVID.

Deputy Chair, I would also note that we heard earlier today the government cite the number of nine percent of government employees who have not submitted a vaccine attestation. While it is possible that more will file that today, as with the numbers provided by the minister's colleague, there is the potential that up to nine percent of Yukon government employees are going to be placed on leave without pay due to the government's vaccination policy. The question would be: What are the impacts going to be on areas such as community nursing? What will the impact be on areas such as EMS, fire, and RCMP not only directly but also if road maintenance suffers as a result? A final question for the minister on that note is whether any other jurisdiction has this broad a vaccine mandate for employers, NGOs, and contractors.

Actually, I will add one more, Deputy Chair, which is just the fact that, in debate with the appearance of the witnesses yesterday — the acting chief medical officer of health and the other public health doctor who appeared here — we did ask the question about whether they had looked at issues such as the unintended negative consequences of a policy. I am just trying to find the actual reference to that. We discussed yesterday, on page 1103 of Hansard, the possibility of "... unintended negative consequences from this policy, including an increase in stress, other mental health problems, substance abuse, and potentially an increase in domestic violence." I asked if they could talk about that for a moment and asked, "Did the modelling used in making the recommendation consider these unintended consequences? If so, are they able to indicate what the predicted impact of those secondary unintended consequences might be here?"

There was an indication that they did not have that information. I would ask if the government has done any modelling assessment of the impact of those unintended consequences, as well as, of course, as I mentioned previously, what the operational impact will be in rural communities in particular but also in Whitehorse.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, I appreciate the question about the pharmacists and our relationship with them. Here in the territory, it is an incredibly important part of providing medical care and an important part of medical care

for Yukoners. The effect that pharmacists have in our daily lives is absolutely crucial, not only as individuals who present medication when needed, but the advice that they provide overall to Yukoners with respect to medical care generally is so important.

The pharmacists regulation came into effect on August 1, 2019. It provides an expansion in the range of services that Yukoners can receive from pharmacists. Pharmacists can adapt or extend existing prescriptions under certain circumstances and access and use lab results related to prescriptions and administer injections and vaccines in some cases, which is a great change in scope of practice that benefits all Yukoners.

We have agreed on a compensation model with Yukon pharmacies to compensate pharmacists for the delivery of these services and we're committed to continuing to work with pharmacists to streamline services and to do better for Yukoners.

Pharmacists have worked, and it's important to note, alongside community nursing staff to deliver the COVID vaccine, both in Whitehorse and in communities. Since the notation of the letter made by the member opposite, we have ironed out a number of things with the Yukon pharmacists.

There was certainly a difference of opinion at the time about interpretation and application of the way in which pharmacists and the Yukon government were relating to one another. The Department of Health and Social Services officials meet regularly with pharmacists and their association. The medication assessment is complete and in place to the satisfaction of Yukon pharmacists. We have resolved with the Yukon pharmacists the issue of the markup, and conversations about travel vaccines are underway with them. We are very pleased with the partnerships with the Yukon pharmacies and pharmacists in relation to providing the flu vaccines to Yukoners, which is important. We have managed to put in appointments for flu vaccines at various pharmacies in the territory into the CANImmunize system so that Yukoners can book online, for their convenience. I know that there are a number of pharmacies in the territory that have walk-in services for those kinds of things, and the one thing I should clarify is that pharmacists are not permitted to vaccinate children under the age of five, so that would not be an option for them, or to provide flu vaccines for that group of children.

I can also indicate that — to return to one of the questions that I had previously — from 2016-20 — and I have said this before in this House in relation to the number of physicians; I think that was the question earlier — that they increased between 2016-20 from 78 residents to 95, which includes resident physicians and specialist physicians. Resident physicians alone increased from 68 to 75 in 2016. I think that's important.

I should take the opportunity to return to one of the quotations made earlier from the Canadian Institute for Health Information document and in relation to the figure that is in *Putting People First*. The full extent of that quote indicates — then there's a footnote to that quote actually, the one that the member opposite keeps speaking about, and it's an important

piece of information that the footnote to that quote doesn't include — the figures with respect to the Yukon do not include locums and they should, and the number in *Putting People First* remains to be correct in that, per capita, we have a lot of physicians — more physicians than some jurisdictions and most jurisdictions in Canada. I think that is the end of that.

I apologize. There was a question in the middle with respect to vaccines. I am afraid that I wasn't able to hear what the question was. Then the last question was regarding unintended consequences of these policies.

I don't really want to guess, but I think the other question was about whether or not the broad mandate here in the Yukon is similar to that in other jurisdictions. In fact, it is with relation to employees and individuals who perform work at workplaces or worksites on behalf of government. If I have misunderstood that, I am happy to return, if there is another question.

The third question was whether or not the unintended consequences of these policies had been considered with respect to the mental health stresses and others. What I can say is that, every day, with respect to every decision, we turn our minds to the unintended consequences — or sometimes the intended consequences — but we are clearly evaluating these decisions in a very serious light. None of them are made lightly, and none of them — do we even want to make them, frankly. Yukoners need to be protected. We are making these decisions based on the information we are provided by the medical officers of health, by the epidemiology, by assessment and the modelling from across Canada and up in our little corner of the world. We make those decisions with all of the consequences, intended and otherwise, in mind every day, in relation to the primary requirement of those decisions, which is to protect the health and safety of Yukoners.

I should just return to the issue of pharmacists, in case the member opposite had some more questions. We also completed work on the medical assessments, which help people review their medications and determine any concerns. We did that work with the pharmacists, and we also resolved an over-the-counter dispensing fee with pharmacists, all of which were part of the outstanding matters in the summer of 2021. I am happy to say that those are primarily resolved now. As I've said, the travel vaccines are still an ongoing conversation, but I think the most important thing is to know that we have a relationship that is open and a partnership that allows us to talk and resolve these issues. To do otherwise would not be in the best interest of Yukoners.

Mr. Dixon: The minister's last answer is a perfect lead into my question now. I have just received some questions from some allied health professionals — some folks who work in allied health — who had some questions about the *Public Health and Safety Act* regulation, or OIC, that came out with regard to the vaccine mandate. They had some fairly pointed questions. I will lead right to those: When the government first announced the vaccine mandate several weeks ago, they indicated that it would apply to all those who work in hospitals, long-term care homes, medical clinics, and allied health care settings. We have since learned that allied health care settings

include pharmacists, optometrists, physiotherapists, and a number of others.

Those business owners who work in private practice in allied health have been under the impression, up until the publishing of this regulation, that they were subject to this vaccine mandate as well; however, the OIC that has been passed so far makes no mention of allied health care professionals, so the call I just had from the owner of an allied health care business was about whether or not this applies to their business starting tomorrow. They have been under the impression, up until recently, that it did, so they've been preparing their employees to go on leave without pay if they aren't vaccinated; however, they are concerned now that, because they appear to be excluded from the regulation, they don't have the legal backing to take the employment law action of putting their employees on leave without pay.

The question is fairly simple: Does the vaccine mandate apply to allied health care settings? If so, where in the regulation can the minister point to us that it applies? What response does she have to the queries from those working in private practice in allied health about whether or not this applies to them?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The OIC that was passed last night and published last night does not, quite correctly, as mentioned by the member opposite, deal with allied health professionals. There is a document before Cabinet for a Cabinet meeting that will take place tonight that does deal with allied health professionals and the details with respect to how that regulation will apply to them.

I can also advise that the Department of Health and Social Services met last Friday with a large group of allied health professionals who were all invited to have an information session with respect to the OIC, or the regulation, that is coming that will apply to them as a result of the information that they had previously about how they would be included. That conversation last Friday was for the purposes of discussing the vaccine mandate and how it would apply to them, and that conversation took place, as I said, a few days ago, in order to provide the most up-to-date information possible.

I can't say more about the details of the regulation. I don't have it with me, but it will apply going forward.

Mr. Dixon: Just so I'm clear, there will be a subsequent regulation, it has yet to be passed, Cabinet will determine the details of that sometime later tonight, and it will come into effect a few hours after that at midnight — is that correct?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Yes.

Mr. Dixon: So, can the minister provide us a list of what is included in allied health care settings that this will apply to come midnight tonight?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Sorry. Thank you. I think the member opposite maybe didn't have a chance to hear me. I said I don't have a copy of that with me. Besides, it wouldn't be appropriate to speak about it until the details of Cabinet and the conversation there.

However, what I can say is that the application, or the information that was provided at last week's meeting by the Department of Health and Social Services, would not have been

a list of the details, but it certainly would have been the concept that the vaccine mandate will apply to allied health professionals in their working situation.

As the member opposite mentioned in his letter, they have been getting ready for this. They have been preparing for the fact that their employees will be affected. I'm told it was a very good question-and-answer opportunity for them, and they had their concerns addressed there. The vaccine mandate will, in fact, apply to those kinds of businesses for the purposes of protecting the health and safety of Yukoners. There are businesses where individuals are in close contact with other individuals, and the concept of having those individuals vaccinated is an important one.

The list of allied health professionals has been identified by the acting chief medical officer of health for Cabinet consideration and that will be part of the regulation coming forward.

Mr. Dixon: So, the minister was able to convene a meeting of allied health care professionals, but she is not able to tell me the list of who attended that meeting or which professions it includes. That seems a bit odd to me.

At that meeting, did she communicate or did her department communicate to those folks that the regulation bringing into effect the vaccine mandate for this sector would be delayed until mere hours before it is intended to come into effect? Was it communicated to them that there would be one regulation under the *Public Health and Safety Act* that was put out this morning and that another one will be coming after that? Because the folks I spoke to certainly didn't know that and were certainly surprised to hear that the regulation that came out very recently did not include them and that they would be covered by a separate, subsequent regulation that would come into effect mere hours before the deadline.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Let us be clear. I didn't say that I was at the meeting; I said that officials from the Department of Health and Social Services held the meeting. So, no, I didn't say anything to allied health professionals because I wasn't there.

However, the officials who were there had a question-and-answer session where they answered questions of allied health professionals — business owners — about the fact that there would be a regulation that would be coming into place at midnight on November 30 that would affect them. Whether that is done a few hours before that — mere hours, as noted by the member opposite — I don't think that probably concerns them. The fact that the regulation and the fact that these restrictions — this vaccine mandate — will apply to them is something that they have known for a number of weeks now. They have certainly had access to officials at the Department of Health and Social Services to provide them with details on how that might be affecting their business and, more importantly perhaps, with how their businesses might benefit from the economic program that has been put in place with respect to having the opportunity to have some funding to assist with the app, or devices for the app, to have their businesses be able to check people's vaccine status and other supports that are in place. Economic

Development has also been reaching out to local businesses to help with answering their questions.

Mr. Dixon: My question was: Was it communicated to the allied health professionals that there would be a subsequent regulation that would apply specifically to them? When the folks whom I have spoken to saw this regulation come out and noticed that they were not included, they became worried that they had either been forgotten or ignored by the government. My question is simple: Was it communicated to them that there would be a subsequent regulation specific to them coming out late in the evening before this comes into effect?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: One thing that I can assure you is that the extremely hard-working professionals at the Department of Justice who are drafting these regulations would not have forgotten about the instructions that they have received from government based on the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health. I appreciate that this is sort of a flippant remark, but it's insulting to them and I don't think that it's fair. They would not have been forgotten. They were advised that there would be a regulation. I was not at the meeting, so I couldn't say whether or not they were advised that there would be two regulations to deal with the details of the vaccine mandate. What I can say is that they were told that there would be a regulation and that it would be in place before November 30. They were discussing the details of what that might mean for them, and they have been advised of that information for a number of weeks now.

Mr. Dixon: Can the minister tell us who was at the meeting and which businesses and fields were represented? Of course, if they were at this meeting, it's surely not a secret which sectors this applies to. Can the minister just simply provide us with a list of who this is going to apply to in advance of the regulation coming into force later tonight? As we all know, the deadline is midnight tonight.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I can provide you with the list of businesses that were represented at the meeting. It won't be right now, but I am happy to provide that to the members opposite.

I have already noted in one of my responses that a list of allied health professionals who will be affected by this regulation has been identified and listed by the acting chief medical officer of health, and that will be before Cabinet in the consideration. Whom it is applying to will be clearly defined in the regulation.

Mr. Dixon: So, the minister knows whom this is going to apply to, but she is not able to tell us now. Can the minister commit to telling us whom this is going to apply to before midnight?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I was asked whether or not I could give you a list of who was at the meeting. What I said was that I would be happy to give you a list of who was at the meeting. I just can't provide it right off the top of my head, but I will have department officials supply a list of who was participating at the meeting.

I have also said that there is a specified list of allied health professionals — not specific businesses — to whom this will apply and will be included in the regulation. It will be clear.

Mr. Dixon: My simple question — I apologize if there was some miscommunication — was: Which professions will be covered under allied health care, and can the minister offer some glimpse into what that list is going to look like?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The list of allied health professionals to which the regulation, should it be adopted by Cabinet, will apply will be: optometrists, chiropractors, dentists, dental hygienists, dental therapists, physiotherapists, midwives, acupuncturists, audiologists, denturists, dieticians, massage therapists, naturopathic doctors, occupational therapists, podiatrists, psychologists, respiratory therapists, social workers, speech language pathologists, therapists, and counsellors.

Mr. Dixon: Does the minister appreciate that leaving this to the last minute like this makes it very difficult for these businesses, considering the fact that they have to — before the end of the work day today — let employees know that they won't be able to come to work tomorrow or they will be able to come to work tomorrow? If they make that decision to let them know that they can't come to work tomorrow, and they don't have the legal backing of the regulation, it puts them in a precarious legal situation. At least that is the opinion of some of the business owners whom I have spoken to who have had advice from their lawyers about the fact that they can't tell someone that they are going on leave without pay unless there is a law or regulation in place that says that they must.

As of now, as the minister has admitted, there is no law or regulation that says that they must. So, it puts these businesses in a very difficult position because the government left this to the very last minute. It almost cannot be more last minute than it is now. It is about 3:57 p.m., so the work day ends for a lot of these professionals within about an hour or two, and they will have to let their employees know by then whether or not they are coming to work tomorrow.

That is something that I think the government should have prepared for a little bit better — that they could have had this ready to go much sooner than they have, because the regulation that was released this morning does not include them, so there was natural confusion, I think, among businesses who felt that they had been forgotten in this regulation. Now, after the fact, after receiving criticism, the minister is committing to pass a regulation by midnight tonight or sometime late in the evening, and that will, of course, leave very little time for these business owners to notify their employees by 7:00 a.m. or 8:00 a.m. tomorrow when they are supposed to show up at work.

I'll leave it at that, Deputy Chair. I am sure that we will probably be breaking here soon. Let me just express my concern about the timing here and a lack of communication with these businesses. The fact that they are calling the Legislature now, calling the minister's office, and not getting any answers is a disturbing indictment of the lack of communication that the government has had on this particular file.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It won't surprise the member opposite that I don't agree with all of his concerns. I certainly wish that we could magically have drafted a very detailed and specific regulation like the one that was published last night —

some 18 pages, but I don't recall the exact number — and it is obviously detailed and very specific to help Yukoners understand this vaccine mandate and how it's going to move forward.

There are 24 hours in a day, and that's all I'm going to say about that, other than to herald the absolutely amazing work of the Department of Justice and the other departments that have worked with the Department of Justice to bring forward this important aspect of the law.

Let's be clear. More than a number of weeks ago, allied health professionals were aware that this was going to apply to them. It is not like the member opposite is alleging or insinuating, that allied health professional business owners will not know the details or would not have known details about this until today.

They were told; there was reach-out to them. There were opportunities for them to have their questions answered. They were advised that they would need to have a policy, but that it is up to them as the employer to determine if there are going to be any repercussions. The law will not enforce repercussions on behalf of those allied business owners. The idea is that we should have the application of the vaccine mandate to those employers, to those businesses, because it is an opportunity for Yukoners to be protected, for the health and safety of Yukoners to be protected, in relation to allied health professionals who provide a number of services to Yukoners often in very close quarters, or in close proximity to those individuals, and that Yukoners deserve to have the security and the confidence that those services are being provided to them under the restrictions of a regulation, which has been well-advised — those businesses have been well-advised that this regulation was coming. Do I wish it was sooner? Absolutely. Do we all wish it was sooner? Absolutely. But every effort has been made in the meantime to answer those questions of those businesses and the opportunity for them to be made well aware of the fact that much of this will lie in their hands.

Deputy Chair: Is it the wish of the members to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Deputy Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Ms. Blake: I would like to thank the officials for being here today.

Last week, a report card on child and family poverty in Canada was released. On the one hand, it noted that Yukon's rate of child poverty in Canada is below the national poverty rate, but it still sits at over 11 percent. The most worrying part

for Yukon children in this report is that the rate of poverty in 2019 started creeping up, one of only four provinces or territories to see an increase in their child poverty rates.

The questions I have are: How many children under the age of 18 are included in the number of clients receiving Yukon government social assistance? Has the minister read this report? What action is the minister taking to address the rising number of children in poverty? Has the department done any research on increasing social assistance rates?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. Before I start, I just want to fix something that should have been done earlier. I wanted to welcome back assistant deputy minister Karen Chan and Deputy Minister Stephen Samis from the Department of Health and Social Services who are assisting me here today and assisting all of us with the answers that are being sought. I was remiss when I first took the floor in not welcoming them back and thanking them for their contribution today. Thank you for that opportunity.

I can say to the member opposite that this is an incredibly important question. I was surprised that it hadn't come sooner because I was aware of the report. I have not had the opportunity to read the report, but I will do so. It is a future topic for my meetings with the Department of Health and Social Services. Year over year, we are seeing increases in our social assistance caseloads here in the territory that are in line with Yukon's population growth. That also takes into account that there are some seasonal fluctuations. We sometimes have more individuals seeking assistance in the summer when travellers come and those sorts of things.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 was of course an unusual year. Caseload numbers and program costs both slightly decreased in November and December 2020 and have remained relatively stable in early 2021. We continue to collect data and monitor the caseload numbers and costs to better understand trends. Yukon's social assistance benefit rates are among the highest in the country. Our earned income exemptions which support people who are re-entering the workforce are also greater than many other jurisdictions. Yukon's rates are indexed to inflation with rate increases of 1.9 percent in November 2019 and 1.6 percent in November 2020.

Yukon is unique compared with other jurisdictions in the country in that our front-line social assistance staff are social workers, which I think is incredibly important, not just because my sister is a social worker — not here, but she is a social worker, and we often have the social worker versus lawyer conversations at our family dinner table — but I digress.

Social workers work directly with clients to provide both short-term, stabilizing, and longer term case planning supports, which I personally feel are incredibly important — the idea of some wraparound services to support individuals who are both clients of the service at the time, but often wanting to change their lives in a way that we can support.

As of May 2021, the monthly benefit rate for a one-person household in Whitehorse can be up to approximately \$1,474. A person with a disability who receives the Yukon supplementary allowance and is eligible for schedule B benefits or specific

benefits could receive up to \$1,833 a month, and the monthly benefit rate for a family of four with two children under the age of 14, living in Whitehorse, can be up to approximately \$3,100 a month. The Yukon has higher benefit rates in communities outside of Whitehorse to account for the higher cost of living that happens there. I do not have the answer to — maybe I do; just a moment — the number of children who are in families who are receiving social assistance, but we can obtain that number, and I can provide it; I don't have it today.

I think that those are the answers to the three questions, including that I have not completed the report but will do so and will have this on a topic of agenda with the deputy minister and I as we — I was going to say “resume more regular meetings”, but we have the opportunity to see each other, I would say, daily or more than once a day often — but it will be a priority for us, the report having come out, and we need to analyze it to determine what it means for Yukon children.

Ms. Blake: I thank the minister for her response. The next set of questions that I have are in regard to our children who are connected with the Family and Children's Services branch. The questions I have are about keeping our children in the communities in mind with these questions, because our children in communities have, I guess, lower options for foster homes or short-term placements in communities.

So, the questions I have are: How many children are residing in extended family care agreements? What supports do families receive from the department to support the child or children? How often is the social worker in contact with families who are in an extended family care agreement, and what are the plans to increase the availability of foster homes in communities so that children do not have to leave their home community for care?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: That is an important question for Yukon families, and I will try to provide as much information as I have. I don't think I have the specific number of how many children are subject to extended family care agreements, but let me see if I can answer the rest of those questions.

Our interests are always to keep children in their home or with their family of origin, if it is at all possible. That is why extended family care agreements are so incredibly important. It keeps a child close to their family or often in their family of origin but have other caregivers be responsible for them.

The note that I have is that, as of August 21, there are 130 children who are under extended family care agreements here in the territory. We work very closely with families for the purposes of keeping children there.

The additional question the member opposite may have is that there are, again, as of August, 78 children in the care of the director. Seventy-eight is too many, but that is an extremely reduced number of what has been in the past.

Partly that is as a result of the interest in using extended family care agreements and other options and supports for families — supports for families of origin — so children can stay there and have certain supports without having to become subject to an order or be in the care of the director or even subject to extended family care agreements, although there are great opportunities in extended family care agreements for

support for families of origin or parents — caregivers — of children.

We have gone from over 300 children in the care of the director back in 2015-16 to 78 this year, so that is progress. Under the *Child and Family Services Act*, when a child can't remain at home or safely in their home and they need out-of-home care, the first choice is to place them with an extended family member to enable closer connections to family, community, and culture. Of course, extended family care agreements are also a benefit because children can often remain in their home community.

Part of the questions being asked are about foster families and foster homes, and of course, those are an extension of care in the community, if they can be found and if they can provide service and care to a child, but extended family care agreements almost always allow a child to be close to their community — and even if it's in a neighboring community, certainly close to their family.

Extended family care agreements provide resources and supports that allow children to be placed with their extended family while the protection concerns are addressed, which is always key, of course. In addition to supporting children and youth through extended family care agreements, we also enter into a number of agreements with youth, with support services for youth who are between the ages of 16 and 19.

I know the department is very proud of transitional support service agreements with young adults aged 19 to 24 and family support agreements. The reason I emphasize this is because I know it was a key factor of interest for the former minister, and the idea of transitioning — which wasn't the case — we've all heard horror stories of a child who is in care but comes to the age of 18 or 19 and then there was no transitional care, and that was certainly not acceptable. Sending these young people out into the world with the supports that they need between the ages of 19 and 24 can make all the difference in the world to how they will ultimately make their way in the world.

As of June 2021, there were, as I've said — sorry, in August, 78 children in care on either continuing or temporary or interim care orders or voluntary care agreements. I know that the member opposite knows the distinctions between those, based on her former work, but there are different categories of care, all to support a child. Of those, I'm going to say approximately 15 are living in group care.

We work with Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations to develop caregiver strategy and to recruit, retain, support, and train extended family caregivers and foster caregivers who are providing for children. I think that's an important development over the last number of years. The use of the extended family care agreements continues to increase. I'm pleased by that.

I think the member opposite's question is an important one, and I think she will likely be pleased that, because of the reasons we have said, children can sometimes, and almost always, stay in their home community, if that's available.

Of the 141 children supported in extended care — I have some numbers from June, but now it's August, so the numbers are down to 130. So, of the 130 children supported in extended

family care agreements, about 65 percent identified as Yukon First Nations. Of the extended family caregivers, 67 percent identified as a Yukon First Nation.

I should also speak just briefly about — we're continuing to operate, and I'm going to say this incorrectly, but it's the Nts' äw Chua transitional support program. This is back to youth, and we have seen youth settle into the program and prepare for and embark on the next stages of their lives. With support from dedicated staff and the appropriate program offerings, these young people are able to navigate life just a bit easier. I'm very pleased to draw attention to that program, because I know it is so incredibly important for young people who have been subject to being in care.

We're also working with the Council of Yukon First Nations and Yukon First Nations on family reunification efforts for children who are in care.

I can indicate that one of the issues that has been brought to my attention — having worked in the area of child protection in the past, I am very interested in this — is the idea of transitioning children when they are in foster care, or even when they are in extended family home care, back to their family of origin or to their parents. Those transitions have to be respectful of the child and have to have the child at the centre of those decisions so that they are done in a timely way, in a way that supports the child becoming familiar with the other home again, and in a way that transitions and takes into account the cultural and emotional aspect of having maybe stayed in a foster home for a long time and then going home to a different place to live. Those are really important things to take into account. It is one of the things that I have been speaking to the department about, wanting to know more about how we can do that better and provide training to social workers and foster families about it.

We are doing a review of caregiver supports, and we will be developing an action plan on supports after the review is done.

We also are working on — maybe this is the next question — a review of the *Child and Family Services Act* with our partners, First Nation governments, CYFN, and others to take into account the recommendations that came from a review with respect to that piece of legislation and to embed in it more culturally appropriate concepts. There are opportunities to make sure that there is a recognition and a focus that this is a system that is unfortunately in some situations necessary, but that it must be child-centred and child-focused. I am going to stop there.

Ms. Blake: I thank the minister for that response.

The Child and Youth Advocate office highlighted gaps in access to mental health supports for children and youth across the Yukon. What is the department doing to close these gaps, and how many full-time youth counsellors are there in the Yukon?

I understand that this might be a Department of Education question, but my other question is: Do any of the Yukon schools employ full-time mental health counsellors on-site? If so, how many, and if not, why not?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am afraid that I don't have those numbers with me. I think that we should calculate the number of social workers who are focused on child protection and family care in Whitehorse but as well as in the communities, and we can provide that number for you. I am afraid that I don't have it just now.

I can say that we have 102 mental wellness workers across the territory, but some of those would be focused on services for children and others would not, so we can get the breakdown for you.

As part of the last question, I wanted to also indicate that, in the current budget, we have put \$1.3 million to support cultural events and activities for First Nation children who are in out-of-home care and cultural programming for those families — so, to keep them connected to their culture — and activities for them to learn about their culture and to continue to be embedded in their culture as much as possible. That is focused on children who are in out-of-home care, so anyone who would be in extended family care agreements or in a foster home or any in the care of the director. That is being administered with the Council of Yukon First Nations — so, an important new program to help kids be connected to their culture.

Ms. Blake: I just have a follow-up question in regard to the \$1.3 million for cultural events. Is that amount recoverable, refunded, or recovered through the federal government?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Of the \$1.3 million that has been assigned for this program this year, \$1.2 million is recoverable from Canada, and the additional \$100,000 comes from Yukon.

Ms. Blake: The *Putting People First* report came out in May of last year. When will we see an implementation plan and timeline of how this government is planning to adopt all of the recommendations in the *Putting People First* report, which the previous Minister of Health and Social Services accepted in full when the report was tabled last summer?

In the *Putting People First* report, it was recommended that we replace the Yukon Hospital Corporation with "Wellness Yukon", a health authority.

Can the minister tell us what is happening with that recommendation, and when will those recommendations be implemented?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. The *Putting People First* report is, as I've said before, the pathway forward for Yukon's health system and how we are going to become a system that is people-centred — hence the title. A comprehensive review of the health and social services system included significant engagement between the independent panel experts and Yukon First Nation governments, stakeholders, and health and social care providers and Yukoners.

Our government has committed, as the question said, to the 76 recommendations in the report. We have formed an implementation committee to oversee the report and will twice annually report publicly about the recommendations and how they are being implemented.

We are working on the implementation framework, and reporting will be shared with the implementation committee.

The framework will support communications on the project in the months to come. We are committed to continued discussion, engagement, and partnerships because that is the only way that we will get a better system.

It will include NGOs, allied health professionals, health care providers, and physicians in communities and First Nation governments and Yukoners.

We are already working on 30 of the recommendations in the report. To date, we've implemented 11 of the recommendations. Some of these include: affordable childcare, which was, of course, an enormous project; transferring the Child Care Services unit to the Department of Education from the Department of Health and Social Services; medical travel enhancements that I got to speak about previously in this debate; establishing a care coordination and medical travel unit; adding more nurse practitioners — we have, I think the number I got earlier was 21 nurse practitioners in the territory; and expanding access to immunizations and preventive treatments.

Those are some of the 11 that we have already implemented. There are 30 being worked on. We will continue to collaborate with partners.

A new director of transformation, innovation, and *Putting People First* was hired in July in the department because this is going to be a situation that requires, really, not just change management within the Department of Health and Social Services and the concepts there, but also change management for Yukoners and how they are going to interact with our health care system. There will be some bumps along the road, I guess, as people will get used to this and as we go down the path of implementing those.

We know that there is a better, more productive, more people-centred process at the end of that road. We know that this has worked in other places — in southwest Alaska. We know that parts of it have been successful in other places. There was careful deliberation when determining that a jurisdiction and a population of our size could benefit from this kind of advancement in health care.

We know, as members of a community, that we need to do health care better and that it needs to be more predictable for government costs, it needs to be more people-centred, it needs to provide better services to Yukoners, and it needs to provide those services across the territory.

I think that I said 21 nurse practitioners, and I should have said 12 — sorry. That's a disappointing change today, but unfortunately, I just got the number mixed up. So, 12 nurse practitioners — and there had only been one or two previously.

The important part of that question is: What is happening with the health authority? In the report, the expert panel recommended that we establish something they call "Wellness Yukon", which is a new arm's-length agency that will be a creature of statute, so a statutory agency that would deliver a range of health and social services and contract with NGOs and other service providers to deliver services here in the territory. In response to the *Putting People First* recommendation, and part of our commitment to that, is that we are working with policy options to establish a health authority in the Yukon. I have had some conversations and meetings with the member

opposite where we are following along closely with this, but as we move forward, we are committed to working collaboratively with, of course, Yukon First Nation government stakeholders and Yukoners to develop and implement a health authority.

Part of our conversations have been that the establishment of a health authority is foundational to many of the recommendations in *Putting People First*, so a health authority will be the vehicle or means by which some of the other recommendations are implemented or actually adopted. The first step in that process is to draft legislation, so engagement and consultation with respect to what that legislation should look like and cross-jurisdictional scans as to how health authorities are structured and the statutes that structure them in other places in Canada. We can learn from other places that have health authorities and then, as we always do, make it a Yukon story and determine how those structures will fit here and operate best here in the territory to give the best service possible to Yukoners.

I should say it this way: That work is beginning and is underway. We certainly don't have anything like a draft piece of legislation yet. We anticipate that it will be a while before that is the case, but it doesn't mean it's not being deliberately worked on right now, because it is. At this point, Yukon and Nunavut are the only two jurisdictions that don't currently have a health authority. Some have one, and some have many more than one. A place like British Columbia, I think, has several health authorities — seven. We can learn from that and how they divide that, but certainly there are other places that only have one, and we can learn from them as well, but the first step is drafting legislation.

Ms. Blake: The next question I have is in regard to seniors' income. If you are receiving the federal guaranteed income supplement, you are eligible for the Yukon seniors' income supplement. Eligibility for various services, like the seniors' supplement, is dependent on folks having the guaranteed income supplement. Unfortunately, when folks accepted the CERB funding, the federal government clawed back on the guaranteed income supplement, since CERB is counted as income, but there are a lot of services in Yukon that are only offered to Yukoners who are on the guaranteed income supplement.

Are Yukoners who lose access to the guaranteed income supplement going to lose access to Yukon services like the seniors' supplement in Yukon as well, and what is the department doing to ensure that this does not happen?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question.

There has been an ongoing conversation between the ministers responsible for social services across the country, as well as their officials, with the federal government that it was not appropriate for the CERB to be a reason for adjustments to be made to guaranteed income supplements. You are correct that this was, in fact, the case. I think that CERB has sort of morphed now into something similar but not quite the same, but nonetheless, what I should say is that has been a topic of conversation by the ministers responsible, and the deputy ministers, that it was not appropriate for Canada to do that and

that it should be reinstated in some fashion. Those conversations are continuing.

What I can indicate, as an aside, is that, very early on when CERB first came out, we dealt with it quickly — at the time, it was through Justice, working with the Department of Health and Social Services — to make sure that social assistance was not reduced by the amount of the CERB.

We worked closely with the Council of Yukon First Nations, and within the Department of Health and Social Services, to make sure that was not going to be an effect of the CERB on social services. We're well aware of the devastating impact this one benefit could have if it sort of knocks the other one out of operation. That said, there are ongoing conversations with the federal government. I can indicate that. Recognizing that happened at the federal level, Yukon has not reduced any services for individuals, and it won't. If you needed to be getting the guaranteed income supplement to have access to certain other benefits or programs, that sort of thing, the Yukon will continue to support those programs or services, even if you are not getting the guaranteed income supplement.

To clarify, I was forgetting the name, but CERB is now called the "Canada recovery benefit", and it acts more like employment insurance by the federal government than like the CERB program that was in place last year.

Ms. Blake: I thank the minister for her response.

We are aware that Kwanlin Dün First Nation is planning a residential managed alcohol program within their community. Will this government be providing a managed alcohol program in the territory as well?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The managed alcohol program being started and implemented by Kwanlin Dün First Nation is remarkable and certainly something that is a positive step for that community.

We support a managed alcohol program. We support the concept of a managed alcohol program, going forward. We will work with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation to see how the implementation of their program goes and learn what we can from that. We have opened the safe consumption site, which has been a priority this year — as the member opposite and the Deputy Chair know — and the resources, the staffing, and the location, et cetera, that have had to go into that in quite short order has, to be frank, drawn some of our capacity to look at other opportunities for these kinds of services, but I know that Kwanlin Dün First Nation, having gone down this road first, will teach us a lot and that we will work with them closely, recognizing the need for something similar, to see if we can't evolve some of our programs and some of our services into something that would look like that in the future.

So, yes, supportive — no concrete plans right now to open such a facility or program.

Ms. Blake: In regard to Alcohol and Drug Services in Yukon, I believe it was last year when COVID first hit that we had a high number of folks in the community on a wait-list to access treatment services at mental wellness here in Whitehorse. I'm wondering: What is the wait-list to access the residential addictions treatment at Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services? Has the department been sending

Yukoners to programs outside the Yukon for treatment? If so, how many have been sent out? What are the wait times like for youth to access treatment? What is the average length of stay for youth at the treatment centre here in Whitehorse?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The wait time just now for the residential treatment services is 35 days. I should note that the capacity of the facility has been reduced slightly during this circuit-breaker period of time with the COVID response, but also there were a couple of COVID cases — individuals who were being served in that facility and were required to be separated from other people — so there was a bit of a reduction in the number of people who could go there. But, that said, it is about 35 days for adults, and that is an adult facility, of course. We do, on occasion, send individuals Outside for treatment. Sometimes it is specialized treatment or complex special needs that are required for the treatment.

I am quite aware that First Nation governments often send and pay for their individual citizens to access programs that are outside of the Yukon Territory, so that is one option. I am also being told that there is currently no wait time for youth to have those services. I think that those were all the questions.

Ms. Blake: I thank the minister for her response.

In reference to detox services, I am wondering if there are any plans underway to increase the number of beds that are available at the detox centre here in Whitehorse.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The Sarah Steele Building, constructed where it is and the block and configuration as it is, does not have any space for expansion. I also understand that this is not permissible in that zoning for it to go a floor higher, all of which is to say that there are lots of reasons why this residential treatment style is successful, but there are lots of reasons why maybe it isn't as successful as it should be. Exploration is happening about a land-based healing program that would be quite similar to the treatment services that are provided there but obviously with the additional piece of land-based focus. The very early information that I have seen about it is that it would be outside of the City of Whitehorse so that there would be an opportunity for people to stay there and to have the benefits of being out on the land and being outside of an urban centre. That would certainly benefit people who are not used to living in Whitehorse, for instance, and maybe even come to Whitehorse for that kind of treatment. That is not always the most beneficial to them either — being close to downtown or close to other distractions.

We continue to work with YCDC to determine the bed availability at Sarah Steele, given the COVID situation. It is changing day to day. I am going to guess that we are not up to full capacity at the moment and that we need to determine that this will happen as somebody recovers.

On average, we send 10 to 12 people for alcohol and drug treatment services outside of the territory in a year, so that might help with some of the information that I gave before. Lastly, I would just like to say that, within withdrawal management services, there are currently 11 out of 14 beds in use for adults and four beds in use for youth, so that is the difference in the wait times. The number of beds in use were adjusted to maintain physical distancing and allow for clients

in self-isolation to access safe withdrawal, and it is incredibly important to not delay those services.

Ms. Blake: I'm going to jump on over to safe supply. Since safe supply of opioids was rolled out, can the minister tell me how many physicians have prescribed a safe supply for a patient? How many Yukoners have accessed safe supply? What work has been done with front-line NGOs to make sure that their vulnerable clients are aware of safe supply and how to access it? Who is currently able to provide safe supply in communities? Which communities are they? Has anyone been prescribed safe supply outside of the Whitehorse-based Referred Care Clinic?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It's important for Yukoners to know that the current ability to provide safe supply here in the territory is as it is in many places in Canada. It is a medically prescribed safe supply of opioids, or opioid-like drugs, to help address the opioid crisis and to help an individual address their needs or interest in not using opioids any longer.

We are expanding access to that medically prescribed safe supply here in the territory and have taken steps to do so. We are currently providing medical education for physician prescribers who work in the opioid treatment services program to expand their familiarization and comfort level with prescribing.

In order for there to be safe supply, doctors must prescribe it, and they need to have training in familiarizing themselves with that kind of treatment.

Also, to further expand, we are working with an addictions medicine specialist in British Columbia to develop clinical training and prescribing guidelines for physicians in the Yukon. With the ongoing clinical training, support, and consultation, the opioid treatment services may now access safe supply through a program at the Referred Care Clinic. That is on a case-by-case basis, so, unfortunately, we would not be able to say — we would not even have data on how many prescriptions would have been issued because that is between a doctor and their patient, but we do have ability at the Referred Care Clinic to add patients every week. We can get some information. We are sort of seeing how it goes for the first month or two, and I will be asking for information as to whether or not the patient load has increased. We can find out about that.

The reason that I have spent so much time on this concept of "prescribed" is that the issue about having a safe supply available in communities involves two things: It involves a medical practitioner who will prescribe for someone in the community; and they have the ability to obtain those drugs or those prescriptions in the community. Obviously, Watson Lake and Dawson might be a little easier than some other places, but when there is a physician travelling to the other folks — or a nurse practitioner can be in touch with the Referred Care Clinic doctors to determine how to best provide that service to somebody who might not be in Whitehorse. These kinds of prescriptions are quite specialized and specific, and sometimes the program involves, for instance, an individual picking them up every day, or a little bit more than that, at a pharmacy. So, having that in a community — for example, in Carmacks or Pelly Crossing — is very, very difficult, but there is support for

individuals who want to have this kind of service, and we can connect them to the Referred Care Clinic or medical practitioners or nurse practitioners who meet them where they are. There will need to be individual situations, I think, where accommodations will have to be made for people to have this kind of access to the specialized care that is not necessarily in Whitehorse.

Our program has been going on for a while. The expansion of that is in its infancy, and we must make sure that we do it well here in the territory, in Whitehorse, and then work to expand. That certainly does not mean that somebody who is interested in this kind of treatment and can come to Whitehorse has to delay in any way.

Ms. Blake: I thank the minister for her response to my questions.

One of the concerns I have is regarding access to travel with the vaccine mandate in effect. My concern is with our citizens who reside in the communities, and they don't have their first or second vaccines. I am wondering if there are any plans in place with the department for citizens who are medevaced from the community to Whitehorse, or outside the territory, and they are not vaccinated. My concern is the support they may need to come back home if they are unable to go on the flight to come back home or if they are being medevaced to Whitehorse from the south. What supports are in place to ensure our Yukoners are able to make it back to their home communities?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: That is an excellent question. It is something that has been recognized by the Department of Health and Social Services and other of my colleagues' departments that work with the federal regulations involving air travel, which is what they are.

Currently, nobody who is a medevac patient needs to be vaccinated. I know that is not your question. If somebody was medevaced from a community, could they go back home on a scheduled flight without being vaccinated? Currently, yes is the answer to that. They can board a plane, if their status is unvaccinated, in that circumstance. All three territories are united on this issue and have been speaking to the federal government about some sort of exemption, if you will, or some sort of way in which we can take into account how individuals travel around the north, which is not the same as they do in southern jurisdictions.

It is a federal government requirement for air travel, at this time. They have extended the deadline, which was November 30, which is today. They have extended the deadline, and we continue to work with them to make sure that there is an adjustment for Yukon, NWT, and Nunavut travellers who have to fly between communities in some places in Canada — the member's home community. Of course, that is an issue here in the Yukon, but in other places in the north, there is more air travel that is required between towns and between communities. As a result, it is an issue for all three territories. It is on the table with the federal ministers, and right now, accommodations are being made.

Ms. Blake: I just have one more final question, which is with regard to counselling support for the communities

throughout the holiday season. Considering that we are going into December, and considering that January is often a time when we see that a lot of our citizens have difficulties with depression and such, I was wondering what the counselling schedule looks like for our communities. With reference to my home community of Old Crow, we do have a designated counsellor who was hired and is located here in Whitehorse.

Do the counsellors have visiting schedules to the communities throughout the holidays? If not, what are the plans in place to ensure that Yukoners have access to counselling support throughout the holidays?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am going to just return to the concept of medical travel for a second, with respect to vaccinations. There has been a recognition, I think, in our conversations with the federal government, and certainly among the territories, that this would extend. The example that we just spoke about is somebody coming from, let's just say Old Crow, to Whitehorse on a medevac and then wanting to return on the scheduled flight home and whether they would be prohibited, and the answer to that is no.

In addition to that, I should have added this idea of having Yukoners travel outside of the territory for medical treatment that is necessary. The position that we have taken with the federal government — and they have adopted at the time — is that access to that kind of medical care is not something you need to worry about if you were in Edmonton or Calgary, but it is something that you need to worry about if you live in the Yukon or one of the other three territories.

Yukoners — let's just talk about Yukoners — are allowed to travel Outside for medical appointments, and that will be maintained at this point, even if they're not vaccinated. I hope that adds a little bit.

We do have Mental Wellness and Substance Use counsellors who will cover the holidays. I don't think the question is if it would be someone travelling on Christmas Day, or that sort of thing, but the manager for Mental Wellness and Substance Use for the communities will reach out to communities soon, in the next number of weeks before the holidays, to provide coverage and see what kind of schedule is necessary over the holidays, because the member opposite brings a good point. It's not something we haven't thought about, in particular in the COVID situation, because there are people — and ultimately, there are people who are isolated from family or friends, whether because they are ill or because of another situation, and we want to make sure that's not contributing to the concern that might occur at what is often a joyous time of year, but not for everyone. We recognize that it is sometimes an issue for individuals who sometimes need more services during that period of time than others. That is the way it is going to be managed right now.

There will be coverage, and there are counsellors in First Nation communities and others in a number of locations, of course, in Dawson, Mayo, Old Crow — as noted, there is a dedicated community counsellor who visits biweekly or by phone. Community support will be available, as needed, outside of a regular schedule.

We are keenly aware that this is often a difficult time for people, and we need to make sure that we have the coverage that we can, that supports Yukoners.

Mr. Cathers: I would just like to return to some questions related to mental health. The report that was recently released by the Canadian Medical Association entitled *A struggling system: Understanding the health care impacts of the pandemic* does shine a light on some of the impacts across the health system in Canada. While the numbers themselves, of course, are focused on a national level, they do include issues that are very relevant here in the territory, including that the report notes a 70-percent increase in opioid-related deaths from 2019 to 2020.

It cites a 68-percent to 94-percent increase in in-person visits for chronic disease care between April 2019 and April 2020, and most notably, it talks about the fact that they identified 4,000 deaths, in addition to what is the normal, that were not due to people being infected with COVID-19, but according to the report, they believe are attributable to it through matters such as delays in diagnosis for cancer care.

It talks about the delays in people seeking care, the delays in receiving care, the impact on chronic disease management, as it mentions the fact that, particularly for Canadians over 65 years of age, roughly 73 percent of those over 65 live with at least one chronic disease. Managing chronic disease often requires frequent use of health care services, including visits with specialists, and during the pandemic, chronic disease management may have been more difficult because of health service closures, the diversion of health care resources to COVID-19 care, and patients' fear of interacting with the health system because of potential exposure to the virus. With chronic disease assessments, it also cites a number of — as of January 2021, compared to 2019 levels, the number of in-person visits being 60-percent below for patients with hypertensive heart disease and 87-percent below for patients with diabetes, compared to previous times.

Those were some of the most notable and concerning aspects of it. We have also heard clearly from Yukoners, from the medical community, and from the Yukon Hospital Corporation during their recent appearance that there are a number of areas where, even before the pandemic, the Yukon had longer wait times than the national standard of what is considered medically acceptable for most of the roughly 13 specialties hosted at Whitehorse General Hospital. We know that there were issues around cardiac wait times at the time, so I am going to put in a few questions related to that.

I would ask the minister if she could provide us with an update on the current wait times for cardiac care, which has been an issue. Also, what do wait times or access to services look like for cancer care, for MRIs, and for other areas within the 13 specialties hosted at Whitehorse General Hospital? As well, I would ask about whether the spirometry service, which had been suspended here in the territory, is now being provided and, if so, how that is structured. Based on the indication that we have heard that the cataract surgery and ophthalmology plan that was in place was time-limited and is coming up toward its end, I would ask the minister about the status of work to renew

that. We certainly hope that it continues to be a focus because of its importance to Yukoners.

Returning specifically to the mental health aspect of this, we know that, even pre-pandemic, there were issues with mental health needs not being adequately met in the territory. We know as well — and it's cited in the Canadian Medical Association's report that they released — that there has been an increase in mental health issues, including anxiety and depression related to the pandemic. This includes anxiety levels increasing — 24 percent of Canadians experiencing anxiety as of June 2021 — and the percentage of Canadians reporting high levels of depression increasing to 15 percent. Self-reported levels of anxiety and depression peaked at 27 percent and 17 percent respectively.

One of the key reasons that I'm raising this now is that it is known that December, while a very joyful month for some people — and I am fortunate to include myself in that category — is also statistically a very difficult time of year for many people. This increase in depression is related to a number of factors — it being the shortest time of the year and stresses related to December that some people feel. It was concerning even pre-pandemic. When you add the pandemic to it and the noted increase in stress levels and depression levels that have been reported by the Canadian Medical Association, among others, it becomes more concerning.

Then, coupled with the government's vaccine mandate and the poor rollout of the communication of it — including, as my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition, noted earlier during debate with the minister — for employers and employees in allied health care, they are expecting a regulation later today that takes effect at midnight, but those people don't actually know what the rules are for their sector tomorrow. That would be stressful for anyone. The Yukon — as the minister will likely be aware, in terms of the vaccine mandate in comparison to other Canadian jurisdictions — has one of the broadest mandates with the fewest exceptions. Looking at our fellow territories, the Northwest Territories has more exemptions, and Nunavut is more focused on health care. The numbers, as of earlier today, were concerning in terms of what we heard from the minister's colleague that, as of this morning, there were still nine percent of Yukon government employees who had not confirmed that they were vaccinated. Presumably, some would confirm that today, but based on the most recently available data provided by her colleague, it might be up to nine percent of government employees who would be taking leave without pay at the start of what is, for many, a difficult month of the year.

Again, as I noted earlier, one question that the minister didn't provide an answer to is what work the government had done, if anything, to look at and assess what the likely increase would be in the unintended negative consequences of the vaccine mandate, such as increase in stress, mental health problems, and associated issues such as increased substance abuse and the consequences thereof, as well as the likelihood of increased domestic violence.

It is worth noting, as well, that the report of the Canadian Medical Association to which I was referring, *A struggling*

system — *Understanding the health care impacts of the pandemic*, cites a number of other concerning factors including a decrease in cancer screenings and an increase in food insecurity of 39 percent, and all of these factors are concerning.

There is also a reference to an increase of 28 percent in children calling the Kids Help Phone for calls about physical abuse and isolation — a 48-percent increase. All of these social determinants of health, as noted in the Canadian Medical Association's report, contribute to overall health. Stress brought on by the pandemic, the closure of public health services, schools, and isolation as a result of physical distancing measures have all had a negative impact on the social determinants of health, as it says on page 8 of the report.

Again, my question would be for the minister: What is the government's estimate of or the likely impact on Yukon government employees and others who are affected by this? In the short time remaining before the end of the day, not knowing how much time that we are going to get to debate this department as this Sitting comes to a close, I would also ask the minister what the impact has been on the testing for other diseases, such as TB and STDs, at Yukon Communicable Disease Control as a result of their resources being understandably very focused on the pandemic.

What steps is government taking to resume childhood vaccination programs, which were suspended, as well as other vaccination programs?

Last but not least, why, despite Health Canada recommending that the SHINGRIX shingles vaccine be made available to people aged 50 and up, is the government only choosing a higher age category?

Seeing the time, Deputy Chair, I move that you report progress.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Lake Laberge that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

May the House have a report from the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the House do now adjourn.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to

Speaker: The House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:29 p.m.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 41

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, December 1, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier Government House Leader* Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
Hon. Nils Clarke	Riverdale North	Minister of Highways and Public Works; Environment
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Government House Leader* Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Minister of Economic Development; Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Jeanie McLean	Mountainview	Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

Currie Dixon	Leader of the Official Opposition Copperbelt North	Scott Kent	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Yvonne Clarke	Porter Creek Centre	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Emily Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Annie Blake	Vuntut Gwitchin

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

*Government House Leader: Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee to November 4, 2021; Hon. John Streicker from November 5, 2021

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, December 1, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.
 We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as the motions are out of date: Motion No. 188, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek North; Motion No. 224, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin; and Motion No. 229, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition.

In addition, Motion No. 266, notice of which was given by the Member for Lake Laberge yesterday, was not placed on the Notice Paper as it is out of order. Pursuant to Standing Order 13(3), the Government House Leader must provide at least 24 hours' oral notice that a motion for concurrence in the report of a committee may be called as government business.

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will proceed at this time with the Order Paper.

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. White: I ask my colleagues to join me today in welcoming Heather Jones, Yukon's chief coroner. It has been a hard, hard go since she became the coroner in 2016, and she has been dealing with the opioid crisis that none of us anticipated. She has done so much work to bring the voices of the dead to us. We thank her for joining us today.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of opioid crisis victims

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Today, I stand to recognize the victims of the ongoing opioid crisis in the Yukon Territory. I am deeply saddened for the lives lost and for the loved ones who have been left behind.

Two days ago, the Yukon's Coroner's Service and the chief coroner confirmed that the Yukon now has the highest rate, per capita, of opioid deaths in the country. It is clear that everyone has a connection to someone who is impacted by this crisis. Many Yukon families are now feeling a paralyzing emptiness as they grieve. Please know that we all grieve with you. You are not feeling your loss alone.

Each one of the people we have lost to substance use has had an impact on our communities. Addiction does not define a person, and we need to work as a community to see beyond

substance use to the heart of the individual. Everyone has their own story, and each story matters.

We must recognize that addiction is a serious illness. These deaths are preventable. We need to collectively address the stigma of drug use and work together to support those in need. Numbers cannot show the raw pain that is experienced with the loss of a life, but we know that they are necessary for us to understand the far-reaching effects of this crisis. We must listen.

According to the Yukon's chief coroner, 54 people have died in the Yukon due to the illicit use of opioids since the spring of 2016; 29 of those deaths have occurred since COVID-19 first started to affect us in March 2020; and 21 of those deaths have happened since January 1 of this year. These numbers are alarming. They are heartbreaking. They stop you in your tracks as you think about the people whose lives have been forever altered. The Government of Yukon and our partners are taking steps to help address this crisis, but we must do more.

Clients of the opioid treatment services may now access a safe supply through a program at the Referred Care Clinic on a case-by-case basis. Clients in communities can also access this program with help from their health centre. There are also services in the Yukon that are working to help people who use illicit drugs. Blood Ties Four Directions has recently partnered with the Government of Yukon's Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services to open a supervised consumption site here in Whitehorse. This space is the first of its kind in the Yukon, and it provides a safe, confidential space for people to use substances.

I would also like to recognize those who strive every day to make a difference: the first responders who give their all to save those who are experiencing an overdose and those who care for those who are left behind. We know that your jobs are not easy and that each and every experience has an impact on you personally. Know that we try to understand the toll that it takes and that we support you in your work.

On behalf of the Government of Yukon, we offer our sincere condolences to the families, the friends, and the loved ones of those who have lost their lives as a result of this opioid crisis. I know that words are not enough, but I hope that you can find some small comfort in hearing this today. You are not alone. Your stories matter. The lives of your loved ones matter, and our hearts go out to you today and in all the days to come.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: On behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition, I rise to recognize the opioid crisis in Yukon. To have the distinction of the worst case count in all of our country, per capita, is not one that we can ignore. Fact: Opioids are a pain-relieving drug that blocks the pain signals between brain and body and have been used for decades in medical settings. Fact: Opioid prescriptions resemble morphine, and OxyContin was the first drug to raise flags that those who are put on long-term pain relief use became addicted. Fact: Opioids are street drugs, can be easily manufactured, and can be laced with

increasingly dirty mixtures that, with even a few grains of fentanyl, can kill.

Even our beautiful Yukon is not immune to the ravages of drugs. We know that more and more families and communities are being ripped apart by tragedy.

The need to reach a euphoric state with the use of drugs can seem exciting at first but quickly takes over a life so that they are willing to risk anything to get the next high.

I'm sure that the young or middle-aged person, or even that elder, did not wake today and say, "I'm going to be an addict." We must continue to provide compassionate health and social service supports so that those who might need help and who might be ashamed or embarrassed to ask will be free from discrimination and judgment. I know that, with social norms, this is a tall order as we all want to believe that it belongs to someone else — not me or mine — but it can happen to any family, any income or social status level.

I would like to thank all who work in the crisis field. We also send our prayers to those who suffer from daily opioid addiction. We send our condolences to those families who have lost loved ones.

As we near the annual Christmas season when we think about twinkling lights, Christmas carols, and a bounty of gifts and food, remember those who have lost loved ones. Keep them in your thoughts. Be safe out there and take care of each other.

Applause

Ms. White: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP to acknowledge the more than 54 lives lost to overdose since 2016 and the 21 lives taken this year. Each death represents the loss of a beloved member of our Yukon community. No part of our society is unaffected — mothers, fathers, uncles, aunts, grandmothers, grandfathers, sons, daughters, friends, and neighbours. We stand with the families and friends of those who have been left behind. We hold your loss close to our hearts; we share your grief and devastation.

We heed the words of the person tasked with speaking for the dead when she said that we must take time to listen and really hear what these deaths are telling us, to be moved to turn and face this crisis head on, to find the wisdom and compassion to support well-thought-out initiatives, and to embrace those struggling with substance use. We need to remove the stigma associated with drug use so that all of those who are affected — either through use or those in support roles — are given a voice and aren't forced to carry this load on their own. I'm sharing this poem by John Mark Green in the hopes that the intention of his words will help us all heal:

How do we go on,
after the unthinkable happens?
How can we carry the burden of knowing
the world can be cruel and dangerous,
the future so unpredictable?
How do we grieve with empty arms
and a head filled with echoing memories?

We are stronger than we know,
and this is how we show it:

Holding each other,
giving comfort in the midst of pain.
Loving more fiercely,
through our actions and the things we say.
Making the world just a little bit better,
every single day.
Never taking life for granted,
knowing that it can be snatched away.

This world may bring deep darkness,
but we are the bearers of light.
We'll join our flames together,
and shine in the blackest of nights.

Mr. Speaker, in these extraordinary and challenging times, we need to dig deep to find that important element of kindness, to hold each other up. We offer our condolences to every person living with a loss associated with overdose.

Applause

In recognition of World AIDS Day

Hon. Ms. McLean: I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to World AIDS Day 2021. It's particularly important to recognize World AIDS Day this year because we need to be reminded that the world faces threats other than the COVID-19 pandemic. We continue to face a global HIV and AIDS epidemic.

In 2020, about 37 million people worldwide were living with HIV. It is estimated that about 680,000 lost their lives to the disease. This is a staggering number. According to the estimates from the Public Health Agency of Canada, there were about 62,000 Canadians living with HIV as of 2018. We also know that about 14 percent of people living with HIV are not aware that they are infected. Numbers like these remind us that we need to continue our efforts to increase awareness and knowledge about HIV and AIDS and to reduce the stigma associated with it.

This epidemic is also concentrated in specific populations. Across Canada, about 11 percent of HIV-positive people are indigenous people, though they represent just five percent of our population. For this reason, we also recognize Indigenous AIDS Awareness Week here in Canada starting today, December 1. It happens each and every year. This national campaign is a collaborative effort by partners across the country in recognizing HIV and AIDS in indigenous populations, and it is continuing to focus on prevention and education programs.

I want to say that, as I prepared to give this tribute, I thought of a really good friend. One of my most cherished mentors has been living with HIV for at least two decades. I am grateful for the medical advancements that have allowed my good friend to continue her important journey and to continue to be one of my mentors.

This year, the World Health Organization is asking us to remember that division, disparity, and disregard for human rights are among the failures that allow HIV to become and remain a global health crisis. These inequalities are made worse

by the COVID-19 pandemic, which continues to cause disruptions and delays to necessary health care. This makes it even more difficult for people living with HIV. Today, I call on all Yukoners to recognize and challenge these inequalities and urge everyone to show compassion for all people who have been affected by this disease.

In closing, I want to thank all of the front-line health care workers in the territory who continue to deliver HIV services to Yukoners. Thank you.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize December 1 as World AIDS Day. There has been much change throughout the world since the international day of recognition was initiated in 1988. An HIV diagnosis was much different for someone in 1988. The global outlook has changed along with treatments, and people can now expect to live full lives with the right services and supports in place.

In 2018, three decades after the beginning of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, it was reported by the Public Health Agency of Canada that there were an estimated 62,050 people living with HIV in Canada. Much has been done to put an end to unnecessary AIDS-related deaths as well as to prevent new infections. Research, technology, and treatments have been life-changing. With continued education and awareness, we can advance further toward addressing this global health challenge.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to acknowledge World AIDS Day today. We have come a long way. For a long time, people didn't speak about the people they lost to AIDS because the stigma was so high. There was a time when people dying of AIDS were cordoned off in hospitals, left to die alone in their homes, denied access to services, and treated without dignity because people didn't want to be near them.

We have come a long way. We are at a time where HIV no longer has to be a death sentence. The race to find a treatment for HIV is a remarkable story, and that race has largely been won, thanks to the hard, hard work of people around the world.

Now we face what is perhaps the bigger challenge: the structural inequalities that decide who has access to that treatment. Those structural inequalities decide who lives and dies. Because when we say that HIV no longer has to be a death sentence, that's only true if people can access the medicine and health care they need.

The story of AIDS has always been one of systemic inequality and of discrimination and stigma. Inequality always comes down to a choice. It's a choice that is made by leaders like us, and so we have a choice and the responsibility to change our systems so that everyone has equal access to health care, medicine, and dignity.

We lost nearly an entire generation of the LGBTQ2S+ community. We are still losing people today, now due to lack of access to medicine, due to poverty, and due to the country that they live in, because ultimately what we needed in the

1980s and 1990s is still what we need now. We need everyone to be able to access health care without judgment and without barriers. It's time to make this story right.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I have, pursuant to section 50(1) of the *Environment Act*, the *Yukon state of the environment interim report 2021* for tabling.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I have for tabling the crime prevention and victim services trust fund annual report for 2020-21, which is being tabled pursuant to section 9 of the *Crime Prevention and Victims Services Trust Act*.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling a letter that I have written to the BC General Employees' Union.

I also have for tabling a legislative return responding to questions from the Third Party during the appearance of the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board chair and president.

Ms. White: I have for tabling a letter from me, on behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus, to the Minister of Community Services outlining our commitment to Bill No. 3.

Speaker: Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 8 — received

Clerk: Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly: I have had the honour to review a petition, being Petition No. 8 of the First Session of the 35th Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Member for Whitehorse Centre on November 30, 2021.

The petition presented by the Member for Whitehorse Centre meets the requirements as to form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Speaker: Accordingly, I declare Petition No. 8 is deemed to be read and received. Pursuant to Standing Order 67, the Executive Council shall provide a response to a petition which has been read and received within eight sitting days of its presentation. Therefore, the Executive Council response to Petition No. 8 shall be provided on or before the sixth sitting day of the 2022 Spring Sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Cathers: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to provide a detailed report showing the impact across departments and government corporations of the vaccination mandate policy, including:

- (1) the number of employees in each area who chose not to get vaccinated;
- (2) the number of volunteers, including EMS and fire, who chose not to get vaccinated;
- (3) the operational impact on essential services including EMS, fire, and highway maintenance; and
- (4) the impact on services in rural Yukon.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to properly recognize the Yukon Hospital Corporation's financial needs by increasing their funding to at least \$98.2 million for the current fiscal year, with additional funding for COVID-related costs on top of that amount.

Ms. Clarke: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to develop and consult on a new law that would empower Yukoners to have the right to get information about potentially harmful or dangerous intimate partners, which in many jurisdictions is known as Clare's Law.

Mr. Hassard: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to direct Yukon's representative to the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance to expedite the negotiation with Novartis Canada to allow access to Luxturna through the Yukon Drug Formulary.

Ms. Blake: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to honour their commitment to subsidize the cost of infertility treatment and travel.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Creative and cultural industries strategy

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today to speak about a new first-of-its-kind strategy in the Yukon that I am very excited about, which is *Creative Potential: Advancing the Yukon's Creative and Cultural Industries*. This 10-year strategy has four themes and 22 actions focused on growing and developing the Yukon's creative and cultural sectors.

We know local creative and cultural industries are facing significant challenges and have been deeply impacted by the pandemic. Our goal is to ensure that they continue to have an opportunity to succeed now and into the future. By working

closely with industry partners, we have identified 10 priority phase 1 actions to implement in the next three years to do just that.

The creative and cultural sector includes those working and participating in the areas of writing and publishing, audiovisual interactive media, music and sound recording, visual and applied arts, live performance, heritage and libraries, as well as the labour force and the institutions required to support these sectors. This includes First Nation and municipal governments, businesses, and non-profit organizations.

Phase 1 actions will provide the greatest support for these sectors, as they rebound from COVID-19, by building digital capacity, helping reach new markets, and providing increased training opportunities. I encourage all Yukoners to read the 10 phase 1 actions on yukon.ca that will guide this work for the next three years. Our government has committed over \$1 million to implement these phase 1 actions, and this does not include the dollar amounts for the three new funding programs that we have announced, which will be developed and are planned to launch in 2023.

Implementing the strategy will establish a solid foundation from which creative and cultural activity in the territory can continue to contribute to the Yukon's broader economic recovery, health, and well-being as we emerge from the pandemic. The creative and cultural industries contributed over \$59 million to Yukon's GDP in 2018, which amounted to two percent of the total territorial economy.

One of the overarching goals in this strategy is to grow Yukon's creative and cultural GDP to 2.7 percent, which would translate into an additional \$21 million annually. I'm proud that our government has completed this mandate item. Yukon has one of the highest concentrations of creatives in the country. We deliver incredible creative products and productions, and we have impressive cultural venues and amazing events throughout the territory.

With tourism in the territory projected to return to its former strength, now is the opportune time for the government to implement a strategy for the Yukon to reach its collective creative potential.

Ms. Van Bibber: We certainly know culture plays a vital role in the territory. Culture adds to the fabric of our communities and the lives of Yukoners on so many levels. It is a way to express who we are, our traditions, and also to tell new stories. We have to look no further than the First Nation culture of our territory, which all Yukoners get to experience and enjoy.

Culture helps Yukoners with their mental health, and it promotes creativity. It is also an economic driver to help diversify our economy with new permanent jobs. With an increasing population, there will be more opportunities for this sector to evolve and grow. We welcome this creative cultural industry strategy.

Glancing at the strategy, it seems well rounded. It addresses everything from written and public works, museums and libraries, live performances, and even new media. The strategy also contains funding opportunities, and we look

forward to hearing more about the new funding programs in phase 1 over the next couple of years.

While COVID-19 has certainly put a damper on many cultural events, especially in-person ones, it seems that this strategy, creative and cultural industries, will be a good spot to come roaring back.

The minister said over \$1 million will be spent on phase 1 implementation. Can he tell us if this work has started? If not, when will the department begin work? We know there are so many creative minds that call Yukon home, and they likely can't wait to get started. We look forward to seeing how our cultural and creative sectors will flourish in the years to come.

Ms. Blake: I have looked over the creative potential and really appreciate that it talks about COVID-19 recovery support for the creative and cultural industries. We understand that this industry relies on community support, tourism, and visitors to the territory. It is evident that many, if not all, creative and cultural businesses have struggled throughout the pandemic. Another theme that stands out is the focus on collaboration and partnership between governments, industry, and NGOs. Both creative and cultural industries have been, and continue to be, active contributors to the territory. Through the sharing of culture and heritage, our communities are even more united, as the creative and cultural industry in Yukon fosters connection, relationship building, and understanding between our diverse populations in the Yukon.

I appreciate the plans focused on career development and helping creatives build, expand their businesses, and access new opportunities and markets. Empowering artists and cultural workers to engage full time in their work is critical. It can be tough to remain focused when you are working extra shifts to cover your bills. The focus on online and digital technologies will no doubt help local creatives in learning and building their businesses and finding new partnerships. It is amazing to see our young, emerging artists, such as Kaylyn Baker, Stormy Bradley, and Natasha Peter, utilize digital platforms to expand their businesses beyond our territory.

I do have a concern. The new programs and supports need funding to succeed. The minister has said in his statement that new funding programs will not be available until 2023. I know that these things can take time; however, I urge the minister to make needed recovery supports available immediately to help struggling creators, museums, and others to not only survive these challenging times, but to also thrive.

I am disappointed that this strategy, which was due in April 2021, is months late. Public engagement closed in February 2021, while Yukon's creators have struggled and anxiously awaited these new supports. I hope that these delays have not caused any further undue hardship to the industry or its workers.

I look forward to hearing feedback from creators and industry and to the further development and implementation of this important strategy.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Since 2019, the departments of Tourism and Culture, Economic Development, Education, and

the Women and Gender Equity Directorate have worked in partnership in a one-government approach to develop the strategy. We held three phases of public engagement with these sectors, and all actions brought forward are based on input from industry stakeholders.

These conversations and feedback that were received gave important insights, information, and ideas, and we could not have developed the strategy without them. We knew that working with those directly in these sectors was the only way to identify where we could support them best.

Again, I want to thank everyone who contributed to the development of this strategy. Of course, we will be reaching out to many of our partners concerning the development in 2022 of our funding programs.

I would like, just in response, first to sincerely thank both opposition members for their supportive words. In response to their questions, we are looking at 2022 to continue consultation with our stakeholders and our partners but also define our programs. We have really taken direction from the sectors to build this entire strategy, and we want to ensure that we continue to do that.

As for the timing, I would say that the microloans — which are really loans that are \$5,000 or less — is work that we are going to move on very quickly, so some of the funding programs will be released more quickly than others. Then, of course, we will define what the program should look like for the other two.

I think it's important to add that, over the last year and a half, we have made sure we have had proper programs in place. We have been very responsive. The programs have been probably the most supportive in the country.

Just in response to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, we have been there with folks in a big way, right from the start. I think they have had good supports. I don't think we have put anybody in a position to lose their business or to be in a situation where they were hard-hit.

When it came to museums and cultural centres, it was the same thing. The previous minister, Minister McLean — who, I have to add, was the political driving force behind this strategy and deserves significant kudos. Also, while in that role, she made sure that our cultural centres and our cultural venues and museums were supported appropriately.

With that, I think that we are in great shape going forward. This is not unique, in a sense, to the Yukon. Globally, there is a movement at all levels of government to recognize the power of culture as a driver and an enabler of sustainable development, which can provide core economic and social benefits. This new strategy helps to identify and address the barriers of entering and participating in these industries and supports diversity and inclusivity to help strengthen these sectors and grow our local economy. Empowering and enabling a diverse range of voices and perspectives to reach wider audiences is one of the strategy's guiding principles. Mr. Speaker, that is because we know that diverse businesses are strong businesses and, by including more people, different voices and views, we create resilient sectors that contribute to the local economy and build strong communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: COVID-19 vaccination requirement rollout

Mr. Dixon: On October 19, the government told the Legislature that there were 5,435 government employees. Yesterday, we asked the minister how many of these employees would be placed on leave without pay today. He responded that he would know by noon today, so I would like to ask him what that number is.

Further, as a result of the last-minute regulation released last night after 10:00 p.m., this vaccine mandate will also apply to a number of private sector businesses and NGOs. So, I would like to ask whether the government will be tracking how many people are put on leave without pay in the private sector as a result of this regulation, and will they share that number as well?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will answer the first part of the question. As of this morning, the Public Service Commissioner reached out to me to inform me that we have 5,717 attestations. That is just over 94 percent of our workforce. We have 122 full-time employees who have not attested; that is two percent of our workforce. We also have 234 part-time or casual employees who have not attested, which is just under four percent.

I want to say that yesterday when I stood in the House, that number was at 91 percent. When I went up and was asked to speak to the media, it had gone up to 92 percent. Later on, when the Minister of Health and Social Services was speaking in Committee of the Whole, it was at 93 percent. Even today, we welcome any employee who wishes to get their vaccination and to attest — to fill out. So, between now and January 30, any employee who is currently on leave without pay and who wishes to come back — then they have the ability to do so. What I would like to do is thank all public servants for their service to the territory.

Mr. Dixon: I thank the minister for that answer. It sounds like there are over 350 people, then, so that's 350 people on leave without pay from the Yukon government and a yet unknown number of people in the private sector. It's important to remember that these are people with families and bills, and this will create financial hardship for these people.

We have heard competing views about whether or not those folks are eligible for EI or other financial support. So, can the government confirm whether or not people placed on leave without pay are eligible to collect employment insurance, and if not, what other financial supports are available to them?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The first part of the answer is that employees who are on leave without pay are not eligible for employment insurance. There's a range of ways in which we are supporting our employees. The main one that I want to reiterate, which I just stated, is that we welcome any of those employees who wish to return to work to get vaccinated and to fill out their attestation — we would welcome them back.

While the member opposite has given the aggregate number of the total number of employees who are on leave without pay, some of those are people who are here seasonally and they haven't been active right now. Some of them are casual employees or on call, so I think that the more critical number that we should look at is the full-time employees, which is two percent of our employees who have not attested.

What I can say is that we will continue to support those employees, as we are able, with the Public Service Commission. They remain our employees, and again I thank them for their service.

Mr. Dixon: Despite the minister's comments, I think that it's worth noting that these 350 people are still people.

Losing one's job is difficult at the best of times, but this will be significantly more difficult for these folks, given that it's the holiday season. This will cause a lot of anxiety, stress, and concern for the well-being of their families.

The result of this will likely be considerable mental health challenges. What mental health supports will be available for individuals affected by this policy? What enhancements has the government put in place to address what will likely be a significant increase in pressure on the mental health of these hundreds of Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I know that the Public Service Commission has many supports for employees and their families around mental wellness. Those supports are there for them. We understand that this has been a hard decision for them. We will continue to support them as much as possible. Again, I wish to thank them for their service.

For all public servants, I want to say thank you for all of everybody's efforts during COVID to try to help and to keep us safe. Of course, this move was as per the recommendation of the chief medical officer of health in order to try to keep us safe around the pandemic. I just heard yesterday, I think, that Nunavut has announced a similar move, so now it is every Canadian jurisdiction. I also know that there are other employers here in the territory who are moving forward with this. This is about trying to keep the territory safe.

I want to thank all public service employees for their tremendous effort to keep us all safe as a territory. Thank you to those public servants.

Question re: School busing

Mr. Kent: So, a number of school bus routes in the Whitehorse area have been partially or fully cancelled with increased frequency over the past few weeks. In some cases, it has been done on short notice and has left parents scrambling to find transportation to school for their children. We understand that one of the contributing factors is a lack of qualified drivers. I'm curious what specific actions the Liberals are taking to assist the contractor in alleviating this driver shortage?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I'm happy to stand and talk about this question that has been placed on the floor today. The Department of Education provides school busing, city transit passes, and transportation subsidies to families to support students travelling safely and effectively to and from school.

Definitely, our underlying goal is to ensure that children are supported and that families are supported.

I would like to start by saying that, like many other jurisdictions, Yukon is facing a driver shortage, and we're working with our contractor always, Standard Bus, to support them in their recruitment efforts. Combined with the pandemic, this is a very challenging time.

In some cases, unfortunately, the busing contractor has had to cancel routes for the day. We understand the impact and challenge that bus routes can have on families. We are working with Standard Bus to find solutions whenever possible. Sometimes they are able to combine routes or have a driver cover two routes. We appreciate that some families are able to drive students to school when a bus is cancelled. We definitely know that outlying areas have more challenges. I will continue building on my answer as the questions continue.

Mr. Kent: Many of the families that we're hearing from live in areas around Whitehorse that aren't serviced by Whitehorse Transit, so that's not an option for them. I am hoping that the minister can elaborate on the specific supports that they are working on with the contractor with respect to the recruitment of drivers.

Mr. Speaker, in some cases, existing drivers are caught in self-isolation due to COVID exposure notices for either themselves or their families. Of course, today is also the day that the Yukon vaccine mandate comes into effect. I am curious if the minister can tell us how many bus drivers are affected by the mandate and have been suspended or placed on leave without pay by the contractor. For those bus drivers who are in self-isolation and are double-vaccinated, are they eligible for rapid tests to allow them to be off work for a lesser amount of time?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will continue on with my answer around the busing issues that we have had this year.

Like most jurisdictions in Canada, there is a driver shortage. I know that there have been times when Standard Bus has brought in drivers from other jurisdictions. We certainly have alleviated a lot of the issues. We had the schedules out really early this year, so we have had less friction around that with families and continue to definitely support them.

Standard Bus is dealing with driver shortages as best as they can. We are working with them to develop contingency plans to help ensure that cancellations do not affect the same route for multiple days in a row. Standard Bus is responsible for notifying schools and families when the bus routes are cancelled. I listen to CBC every morning, and I know that this is something that CBC also covers and they remind folks to go to the bus app to ensure that they are getting up-to-date information. The Department of Education works with the school busing committee on matters affecting delivery and shared busing services.

Question re: Affordable housing

Ms. Tredger: Right now, hundreds of Yukoners are living in dangerous, unsafe conditions. Families especially are being pushed out of the rental market, and home ownership is completely out of reach. These families do not have any safe,

warm place to call home. Instead, they are living precariously in hotels. In some cases, as many as six family members are living in a single, cramped hotel room with no kitchen, no space, and no security.

Being forced to live in a hotel is unacceptable. Can this government tell us how many Yukon families are living precariously in hotels right now?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First of all, I think what's important is that — whether it be Health and Social Services — of course, they have clients who, in some cases, are living in hotels, or in the case of Yukon Housing Corporation, they continue to work with people on our wait-list or with the Anti-Poverty Coalition to identify, with a number of other groups, people who are completely underhoused at this point. We have identified those numbers. The member opposite discussed them in April. In our point-in-time count, we had 151 individuals. The latest numbers from last month showed that 63 children were underhoused.

At Yukon Housing Corporation, we have come back and looked at a number of units. We have 20 units that we would normally not put out. There is work needed on those units, but because we do think that we are in a critical situation, we now have opened up 11 of those units and we are looking to have all 20 opened up.

We think, right now — working with many partners — that we're in critical need of about 32 different homes and units for folks. Those are the people who are in desperate need now. I think that having the largest investment in affordable, social housing in Yukon history is the right thing to do. Many of the projects that we have built are now coming to fruition. Of course, that is going to take a lot of that pressure off.

I will look forward to the second question.

Ms. Tredger: The government can't build its way out of this crisis. Housing is getting more and more expensive, no matter how much the supply increases. We saw an entire neighbourhood pop out of the forest floor in Whistle Bend, and still, housing prices are higher than ever. Until this government treats housing like the human right that it is, we will be stuck in this crisis.

We have heard directly from hotel residents and front-line workers that living in hotels is dangerous and unhealthy. There have been reports of verbal assaults, abuse, and even human trafficking. No one should be forced to raise a family in a hotel room.

So, what is the minister doing to protect the families living in hotels and RVs right now?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that I would debate the preamble. We brought housing experts together, and I know that in those discussions, the first thing — and almost one of the last things that was said — was that if you look at one underlying mission to deal with this, it is to build housing. So, that is what is being said at the national tables and that is what experts who are looking to give advice to the federal government, territorial government, and municipal government are saying.

I think that everybody in this Assembly understands that it is a necessity and a human right. That is why the investments that are being put into place are being put into place.

Again, this is not something that happens overnight. There are a number of factors. I am not standing here to play a blame-game. There are a number of things that are driving this, and we are in a very critical situation. What we are going to do is we are going to support the private sector. Again, we are seeing record building; I think that this is a good thing. We are going to continue to invest in social housing, in affordable housing, with partners across the Yukon; I think that this is the right thing to do. We are going to work with municipalities to ensure that zoning and OCPs are done in a way — and for anybody who watched the municipal elections, they would see that basically all candidates are committed to this.

I think that these are the right things to do and they will make a difference.

Ms. Tredger: We have heard directly from families who spent the summer living in RVs and in tents, but now that winter is here, they don't even have that option; they have nowhere left to turn. Rental prices are unaffordable. Home ownership is impossible. The Yukon Housing Corporation wait-list is so long that people give up before they even apply. For these families, buying a new build in Whistle Bend is not even on the table. These families can't wait.

What does the minister expect these families to do for the rest of the winter?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that the approach we have had is to ensure that we have the most up-to-date data on this, and the folks who are working with clients across the Yukon, and especially in Whitehorse, have a good sense — and those are organizations like the Anti-Poverty Coalition. It is ensuring that you understand what Safe at Home is seeing out there.

Again, I had discussions with the president of the Yukon Housing Corporation this week. We have tracked and have watched a number of individuals who were probably underhoused in the summer. We are seeing a bit over 30 right now — really critically — who we have to house. I never want to see a family in a one-room building with two or three children. Nobody wants to see that, but inevitably what we are going to do is to make sure that we make the best possible decision to keep folks safe with the infrastructure that we have. We are going to continue to build more infrastructure, and we are going to continue to make sure that there are more opportunities for the private sector. That's the work that we have to do.

We're also going to work with the 11 self-governing nations and three nations that fall under the *Indian Act* to work directly with them on the programs that they can get, either bilaterally through the federal government or working directly with us.

That's the work that we are going to continue to do. Progress is going to be made.

Question re: Political party fundraising

Mr. Cathers: The Liberals have brought in strict regulations limiting the size of gatherings and events for

Yukoners. Restaurants and bars can only have six people at a table, and you are not allowed to mingle between tables. Families can only have 10 fully vaccinated people in their own home. Meanwhile, it was revealed yesterday that the Liberals are holding a corporate party in Vancouver in a crowded hockey box while the new Omicron variant of COVID-19 starts to spread. It's not lost on Yukoners that this party that the Liberals are hosting would not be allowed here in the Yukon under the very laws that they brought in. The Premier's actions send a clear message to Yukoners: Do as I say, not as I do.

Why do the Liberals think that it is okay to tell Yukoners to act one way while travelling themselves and partying it up at large crowded events outside the territory?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'm happy to answer questions here today in the Legislative Assembly about fundraising and travel. The members opposite can rest assured that we will travel respectfully. They can also rest assured that, in the jurisdiction that we will be travelling within, we will be adhering to all of the rules and regulations inside that jurisdiction.

Question re: Ross River School

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, the school in Ross River is literally sinking into the ground and needs to be replaced. According to the five-year capital concept, the Liberals are planning on spending \$11 million on stabilization over the next five years. It would make more sense, both for the community of Ross River and taxpayers, to simply begin replacement of the school so we can stop sinking millions of dollars into the stabilization of the school forever.

Will the government agree to begin replacement of the Ross River School?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The health and safety of students across the territory is a top priority for the Yukon government. The Ross River School continues to be inspected quarterly by a multidisciplinary team that includes an architect, a structural engineer, a geotechnical engineer, and a surveyor.

The latest building condition inspection report completed on August 12, 2021 confirmed that the school remains safe for occupancy. Work will continue on the existing school to keep it safe and to help prevent structural movement.

Ms. Van Bibber: The situation and condition of the Ross River School would not be tolerated in a Whitehorse school. How much money has the government spent on stabilization of the Ross River School since the engineering report highlighting instability of the school was released in 2017?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: With respect to the cumulative costs that the member opposite, the Member for Porter Creek North, is asking for, I will certainly commit to return with that information to the House. What I can advise, Mr. Speaker, is that the Ross River School has been undergoing quarterly inspections to monitor for any structural issues.

The building and permafrost conditions at the school have resulted in many structural assessments and repairs over the years.

I certainly recall the former Minister of Highways and Public Works providing those frequent updates to the House in the 34th Legislature.

I can advise the member opposite that, so far in the 2021-22 fiscal year, we have spent \$280,000 on installing water troughs directing water runoff away from the school foundation. We have also done design work for upcoming projects, and there are ongoing inspections and monitoring.

I can also advise that there has been a request for proposals that has been awarded for a consultant team to oversee a multi-year structural maintenance program at the school.

Question re: Weigh station exemption permits

Mr. Hassard: On September 21 of this year, Highways and Public Works issued a notice of changes to the new scale exemption requirement coming into effect on November 1 of this year. Now, these changes are causing serious concern for the firewood delivery companies, gravel haulers, and others.

Can the minister explain why these changes were made and which industries were actually consulted prior to the changes being made?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. I can advise that care and compliance officers working at weigh scales, as well as on patrol, carry out vehicle checks to ensure compliance with the *Highways Act*, Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, and national safety requirements. These officers carry out inspections related to vehicle weight and cargo securement. They also confirm that pre-trip inspections and log books are completed and ensure that vehicles are mechanically sound.

Monitoring commercial vehicles on Yukon highways is incredibly important for the safety of the travelling public and the integrity of Yukon's highway infrastructure. These duties protect the travelling public by ensuring that commercial vehicles and drivers operating on highways are safe, that their loads are secure, and that commercial vehicles are operating within road tolerances, which ensures that unnecessary road damage to infrastructure is minimized.

Highways and Public Works administers Yukon's carrier compliance program, which is responsible for ensuring that commercial vehicles are following Yukon's laws and standards and national standards.

Question re: Opioid crisis

Ms. White: Earlier this week, the Yukon Coroner's Service reported that we have lost 21 lives to opioids since January 2021. Some of these deaths also involved alcohol. Alcohol has always been a problem in the Yukon. With the pandemic, depression and anxiety have worsened. More Yukoners are turning to alcohol to cope.

The mental health and addiction crisis in the Yukon is killing people, and alcohol addiction is a large part of this. The tools to help Yukoners are right in front of us. NGOs, lived experience groups, and other governments agree that the Yukon needs a managed alcohol program. The former CMOH and the RCMP are in favour of a managed alcohol program, and the

Yukon Medical Association just passed a resolution asking for this.

Does the minister recognize the critical need for a managed alcohol program in the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. I answered this question yesterday when we were debating the supplementary budget with respect to the Health and Social Services department. I indicated at that time that a managed alcohol program is a critical tool in the toolbox to help Yukoners and to help us deal with the impacts of alcohol addiction here in the territory. It is an issue across the territory.

I can indicate that I also spoke yesterday about the Kwanlin Dün First Nation's managed alcohol program and how we are watching closely the implementation that they have there and how we might be able to follow their lead. It is a critical part of service to protect and serve Yukoners with respect to addictions management and mental wellness.

I look forward to our continued work on this topic, on the implementation of a managed alcohol program. It is in its infancy. I spoke about that yesterday with respect to the department. Our priority has been keeping Yukoners safe with respect to COVID-19.

Ms. White: I appreciate the minister's response, including saying it is an important tool for Yukon's toolbox, so I guess the question is: When is Yukon going to get that tool?

The government knows that managed alcohol works. At the self-isolation facility in the High Country Inn, there was a pilot program of a managed alcohol program, which was an amazing tool for those residents. The experts recommended it; the pilot project proved that it works, and there was even more funding available at the time.

The federal government had a fund dedicated to addictions programs this summer. If the Government of Yukon had applied, the Yukon could already have a fully funded managed alcohol program here.

But, Mr. Speaker, the minister didn't apply, and now the deadline has passed. Why did the minister refuse to apply for a fully funded program that could save lives in the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I didn't refuse to do anything, quite frankly. Serving Yukoners with respect to addictions — as I have noted, a managed alcohol program is one of the tools in the toolbox. The pilot project, as noted by the member opposite, was successful. It was part of the wrap-around services that this government and the Department of Health and Social Services provided for individuals who were in self-isolation and some who needed those additional supports. It was critical for us to provide those on a case-by-case basis so that individuals could self-isolate, if they had an addiction — to protect themselves, to protect their health, and to protect the health of Yukoners.

It would have been irresponsible otherwise, in my view, for us to require self-isolation for individuals who have an addiction and not help them by providing the medication that they might have needed, and/or the alcohol, if that was part of the situation. That pilot program, as I have noted, and as the member opposite has noted, was quite successful.

I also appreciate the way in which the member opposite makes comments with respect to these programs, as if they can

be done in a number of weeks. They simply can't, but we are working on it.

Ms. White: If there is a fully funded program available from the federal government and all we need to do is apply for it and a government chooses not to apply for it, is that not a refusal?

So, Mr. Speaker, because of the generational trauma and stigma, many Yukoners are suffering in silence. Even when people do reach out for help, they end up on long wait-lists and don't get the support that they need. The minister referenced what is happening at the Kwanlin Dün. Well, Chief Doris Bill said this week — and I quote: “We are crying out for more resources ... We need help.” And yet, the minister chose not to access federal resources for the exact problem when it was available.

So, now the Kwanlin Dün First Nation is hiring a nurse for its own 24/7 supported living residence with a managed alcohol program. And, once again, NGOs and Yukon First Nation governments are doing the heavy lifting when this government won't.

So, Mr. Speaker, why won't the minister open a managed alcohol program for Yukoners?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think that all Yukoners appreciate how fortunate we are, as citizens of this territory, to have the amazing non-governmental organizations and the work that they do to support Yukoners. The partnerships that we have — they are often known as “NGOs”. The partnerships that we have with NGOs, the funding arrangements that we have with those organizations, the partnerships that we have to provide services to Yukoners are second to none.

We have also an opportunity for me to mention the unbelievable volunteer ethic that we have here in the territory. Volunteers provide services to Yukoners across the board. NGOs are, and should be, supported to do much of the work that they are experts in. One example would be Blood Ties Four Directions. We know that they have expertise. We know that they have a working relationship with individuals who live on the street or individuals who have addictions or individuals who need support. They are the experts; we support them. We are in partnership with them, and that is the kind of work that NGOs do for all of us here in the territory, and that should be heralded.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak about this today.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice to call motion respecting committee report

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise to give notice, pursuant to Standing Order 13(3), that the motion for concurrence in the first report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, presented to the House on October 7, 2021, shall be called as government-designated business.

Speaker: We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 3: *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 3, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Mostyn.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I move that Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It is my privilege and honour to introduce Bill No. 3, of 2021, to amend the *Assessment and Taxation Act* and the *Municipal Act*.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of talk about this piece of legislation. It allows municipalities to opt into a Yukon-wide home renovation program. It was first announced in our 2019 throne speech. It is also a key government action in *Our Clean Future*, the Yukon's nation-leading climate change action plan that has been endorsed by all three parties in this House.

Before I begin talking about the legislation in detail, I want to outline some of the work my colleague and I have conducted on this file since 2019.

This program was announced in 2019 in the throne speech. In December of 2019, the first correspondence began between the Association of Yukon Communities and my predecessor on this file. In January 2020, we informed the Association of Yukon Communities that *Municipal Act* amendments would be needed to levy, collect, and remit the tax. This is, in fact, the legislation that is before us today. In February 2020, Community Services met with Whitehorse and heard concerns about the administrative burden that this might place on municipalities. Also, in February 2020, my colleague met with Teslin and heard similar concerns.

In September, in the midst of the initial COVID pandemic, my predecessor discussed legislative amendments with the Association of Yukon Communities. Later that month, my colleague addressed several concerns, including voluntary participation and removing the need for municipal bylaws, made the municipality the lender of first priority, and promised to continue talks to address the administrative burden that had been identified and whether the municipality could keep the interest charged on overdue payments.

In October 2020, Community Services provided answers to those questions to the Association of Yukon Communities. A more detailed program outline and background was provided in an October 15 letter by my predecessor. In November of that year, my predecessor met with the City of Whitehorse to discuss the municipal administrative fee.

In early December 2020, department officials met with Whitehorse officials on the proposed program. Later that month, my predecessor met with the Association of Yukon

Communities on the program. Also in December 2020, Haines Junction sent a letter to my predecessor, committing to participate in the program. It bears noting that this community's questions were answered sufficiently for it to voluntarily opt into the proposal. That was a year ago.

About a week later, the Association of Yukon Communities wrote a letter to my predecessor expressing concerns about using the local improvement charges as a recovery mechanism and complaining again about the administrative burden. No solutions or data were provided at that time. There was no time to discuss these items due to COVID, the association said.

In February 2021, Community Services asked for and received the names for a working group. In March, the Association of Yukon Communities discussed the program again. Later that month, my predecessor approached AYC to continue to engage with municipal partners. A pledge was made to make the program available, while respecting the capacity of municipal governments. My predecessor announced that legislative amendments would be brought to the House in the fall, and they have been brought to the House this fall.

In July, the Premier issued mandate letters that affirmed our commitment to implement this type of program. From June to October, I met with all municipal councils and spoke to them about the home renovation program and that the legislation would be coming in the fall, followed by a working group to collaborate on the program details. From September to October, I spoke with municipal leaders in the run-up to the municipal elections. Earlier this month, I wrote letters to all mayors, answering outstanding questions and committing to work together to build a program and resolve lingering concerns.

On November 21, I attended an AYC meeting to answer questions and discuss the home renovation program with all mayors and councillors. Later that day, I committed to a meeting as early as December 3 and listed working group items, including terms of reference, regulation development, program details, opportunities to reduce the administrative burden, resource requirements, and to highlight the partnership through marketing and communications.

Throughout November, I held numerous meetings and one-on-one conversations with mayors and councillors across the Yukon. On November 24, I held a meeting at the invitation of the Town of Watson Lake. On November 25, I attended a meeting with the Carmacks mayor and council. Just a few days ago, Watson Lake expressed its support for the program but asked for it to be delayed. On November 27, I received a letter of support for the program from the Carmacks council. Even this week, I have been in touch with councillors and mayors across the territory about this program.

Because of the changing climate, something I witness or read about every day, this file is important to me. It is important to me because it is important to Yukoners. Yukoners want this program. There is not a single person I have spoken to who has opposed the program or its goals.

The financial terms are excellent. It makes their homes more affordable, and it takes tangible action on climate change. What's not to like, Mr. Speaker? That's what I ask this House

this afternoon. That very question lies at the crux of this debate this afternoon. We face a climate emergency. What is more important? What could certainly be more important than taking tangible action to deal with a climate emergency? I can think of nothing — nothing at all.

Action on climate is where I sit — period. Everything else is secondary and, I add, solvable. Every single issue that we face is solvable. We are the best problem-solvers on the planet if we put our minds to it. I don't think there is anything that we can't do.

I have pledged to address the municipalities' concerns over the coming months.

Fortunately, the Leader of the of Third Party and I have worked together to give that certainty and the time that we need this winter to better define the program terms with municipalities. This afternoon, we are going to discuss this and we will vote on it, and I have every confidence that this legislation will come back to the House next spring to be resolved in full while we work out the details with municipalities on how we are going to deliver this program to Yukoners collaboratively, together.

This legislation is seven pages long. It is just seven pages. As I have done for municipal leaders — and as my colleague has done before me — let's get into it a little deeper, shall we?

This tiny bill bestows a huge benefit to Yukoners. It enables low-interest money to improve your homes and to make them more energy efficient and less expensive to run. It creates more work throughout the Yukon and more capacity in our municipal governments, and most importantly of all, it is taking tangible action to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. It is progress toward the goals laid out in *Our Clean Future*.

How do we do this in just seven pages? The amendments proposed in this bill enable the development of a new, low-barrier building energy retrofit program financed by the Yukon government at a low interest rate through local improvement taxes.

The amendments would allow the Yukon government to enter into agreements with municipalities, should they choose to participate, to levy and collect the local improvement tax alongside property taxes and remit it to the Yukon government.

Municipal governments will have a choice of whether to opt into the program. As I have committed to in writing, we look forward to working with them in the coming months to draft regulations and to understand and offset any administrative concerns. The legislative amendments before us in Bill No. 3 enable the creation of a program but in no way compel municipal governments to participate. Participation is wholly their choice. If they don't want to offer the program, Mr. Speaker, they wouldn't have to.

What is not a choice is that we are in a climate emergency. It is not enough to state the emergency and then sit on your hands. When you are in an emergency, you must lead. You must take tangible actions to address this crisis. To do otherwise would be shirking responsibility.

Addressing the climate emergency will not be easy. Addressing the climate emergency will take hard work. Addressing the climate emergency will take money, but it will

certainly take less money to address it on the front end than it does on the back end as we are seeing in the province of British Columbia, in the Maritimes, and, in fact, in our own territory after the floods that we saw this summer. Addressing the climate emergency takes innovation, a willingness to overcome red tape, and a commitment to take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

According to the Natural Resources Canada's 2019 *Canada's Changing Climate Report*, Canada is warming twice as fast as the rest of the world, and the north is warming faster than the south.

In 2019, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation declared a climate emergency. "Nature speaks to us," Vuntut Gwitchin Chief Dana Tizya-Tramm recently told the *Washington Post*. "Just not in English." Two years later, the community has displaced 227,000 litres of diesel every year through a solar array in their community. For the first time in half a century, the sound of diesel generators was replaced by silence. The Chief of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation took action, he got a project in place, and we were happy to support that project because that's what you do when you are a leader in an emergency.

We are seeing unprecedented floods and fires. We are seeing what are now being called "rivers in the clouds". It is having a catastrophic effect in other provinces.

The Earth is speaking to us and we must listen. I ask, though: Are we listening? It's an important question as we debate this enabling legislation this afternoon.

Terry Teegee, Regional Chief of BC's Assembly of First Nations, is, like many others, tired of the intransigence and the delay, especially in the face of the flooding and the mudslides that the province is enduring. He said that it is time to change our behaviour and commit to real solutions. It won't be easy, but at this point, we have no choice.

It won't be easy, Mr. Speaker. We have no choice. We have no choice.

The territory saw a 2.3-degree Celsius increase — three times the global average — between 1948 and 2016. Canada will continue to warm over the century. The only question is: By how much? Some estimate between two and six degrees unless we do our part to slow the change. Reducing our greenhouse gas emissions is imperative. We have just eight years to do it.

Climate change brings more frequent and intense wildfires, later freeze-ups — as we saw up in Dawson — earlier breakups and snow melts and with it floods, like we saw in the Southern Lakes and the Laberge region this summer.

We are losing permafrost, which we discussed today. We are seeing it in Ross River. The school is sinking into the muck. It impacts buildings, roads, and highways. The cumulative effect of ecological, economic, and social and environmental effects is catastrophic. We, as Yukoners, have committed to action.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, in May 2019, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation in Old Crow declared that climate change constitutes a state of emergency. It was one of the first First Nations to do so. In June 2019, the House of Commons passed

a motion to declare a national climate emergency in Canada. In September 2019, the City of Whitehorse municipal council declared a climate change emergency. In October 2019 in the Legislative Assembly, Yukon's MLAs voted unanimously in favour of a motion to declare a climate emergency in the territory. Following that, in February 2020, Yukon First Nations signed a declaration that climate change is an emergency and that it requires immediate action.

The Vuntut Gwitchin, Ottawa, Whitehorse, and the Yukon First Nations all have declared states of emergency and all have demanded immediate action. We have heard from folks at COP 26 that they, too, are tired of delays; they want action. We have seen youth in front of the City of Whitehorse demanding action. We have seen youth in front of this very building demanding action. We hear again and again and again that we must act.

Well, this seven-page piece of legislation is what action looks like. Bill No. 3 enables real action. It sets in motion the ability to take real action on climate change to make our houses more affordable, to make our municipalities more administratively sound, to help our economy, and to really reduce greenhouse gas emissions in a tangible way, because fixing our homes and making them more efficient is the best way to actually reduce the greenhouse gas emissions and reduce the load on our grid — the amount of energy that we use. Investing in energy efficiency costs half as much as investing in new power plants, Mr. Speaker. If your home is more efficient, it uses less power, which reduces, as I have said, the load on the grid. If we are using less fuel, we are emitting fewer greenhouse gases. It is simple.

We don't have any more time to waste, implementing the initiatives. We need to cut our greenhouse gas emissions. The land is speaking to us and we must listen. It is time to change our behaviour and commit to real solutions. Now, this won't be easy, as I have said, but at this point, we have no choice. The bill before us includes an amendment to the *Assessment and Taxation Act*. It is a really boring title, but it will help us commit to and deliver on energy-efficient retrofits in the definition of "local improvements". It provides the authority for the minister to construct and fund local improvements outside of municipalities and provides the necessary regulation-making powers for the creation and regulation of the retrofit program, which we have committed that we will work with municipalities on in the coming months.

For local improvements inside a municipality, the Government of Yukon is not the tax authority; therefore, we could only offer this program in that city or town in partnership with local municipal government officials. The proposed amendment to the *Municipal Act* enables municipal participation and outlines how it can opt in to levy the tax.

Why are we on this path? Well, putting the climate crisis at the centre of our decisions is the only way to guarantee a safe future for the next generation of Yukoners. The Yukon's approach to addressing climate change needs to be comprehensive and forward thinking. Increasing the energy efficiency of the Yukon's buildings is identified under *Our Clean Future* as having a significant opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. As stated in that plan, many

Yukoners spend a lot of time inside, whether at home, at work, or at school. How we design, use, and heat these buildings affects our comfort, safety, productivity, health, and finances. Many buildings use more energy than they need. Heating buildings accounts for 21 percent of Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions.

Taking steps to improve efficiency and use less energy saves money, stimulates the economy, and supports green jobs in construction. Improving energy efficiency is a key step toward reducing significant greenhouse gas emissions. *Our Clean Future* recognizes that funding rebates and low-interest financing for retrofits are necessary to meet the target of 2,000 residential, commercial, and institutional energy-efficiency retrofits by 2030. As I have said, that is just eight years away, at this point.

The amendments before us enable the implementation of action H3 under *Our Clean Future*, which is our commitment to provide low-interest financing to support energy-efficiency retrofits to homes and buildings. The details of the program will come, but the intention is to focus on improvements to residential and commercial thermal enclosures, the installation of heat pumps, switching to biomass fuel for commercial buildings, ventilation, and other similar upgrades — types of retrofits that will demonstrate at least 20 percent and up to 45 percent or better energy reduction. This ensures a good return on investment, while also reducing greenhouse gases.

By offering low-interest financing tied to the property rather than the individual, we reduce barriers to accessing the program and increased participation. In examining low-interest options to support Yukoners in their efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we looked at programs throughout North America, as well as Yukon initiatives. We looked at other options, like a traditional loan through the Yukon Housing Corporation, but it is less likely that a household will borrow for retrofits without low-barrier, easy-to-access funding at low interest rates.

Property-assessed clean energy programs, partnership with utilities, loans, and mortgages, and third-party financing are all ways to help property owners undertake energy-efficiency improvements.

Our government already administers programs tied to property taxation. Let me remind my colleagues that the domestic water well program and the rural electrification and telecommunications program provide funding in an amount not exceeding 25 percent of the eligible property's assessed value. Unlike a loan or mortgage program that relies on an assessment of personal finances, the assessment of property value and property taxes in good standing makes this type of program accessible to more people.

The cost of the improvement is recovered by the government through an annual local improvement tax on the property over a period of up to 15 years at the Bank of Canada interest rate, which is currently about 0.25 percent — a quarter of a percent, Mr. Speaker. It's the lowest rate of interest in the country, and it makes it possible for property owners to undertake projects that might otherwise be cost-prohibitive.

Further, if a buyer agrees, the local improvement debt can be transferred with the sale of the property. This means that the cost of improvement can be shared by the owners who benefit from it. By using the same low-cost, low-barrier approach to finance energy-efficiency retrofits, we can help citizens to improve the comfort and efficiency of their homes or businesses while reducing their greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating climate change.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, local improvement taxes for property-assessed clean energy programs are becoming more commonplace in municipalities across Canada. We're not inventing the wheel here, Mr. Speaker. The delivery of this type of program is a shared responsibility between all levels of government, especially in a climate emergency.

We have seen examples — for example, the green energy program in the municipality of Berwick, Nova Scotia and the switch program aimed to help people upgrade to more efficient heating systems offered in Wolfville, Charlottetown and Stratford on the east coast. There are similar programs in Halifax and Toronto. There are more examples from Newmarket, Ontario to Edmonton, Alberta and Saanich, British Columbia. In Ottawa, its better homes loan program is pending launch with funding from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and Vancity credit union.

Here in the Yukon, our commitment goes beyond what we see in other municipalities in Canada. Rather than expecting municipalities to deliver the entire program themselves — funding and more — we are proposing to deliver the program through the Energy branch to provide the financing and hope to work with the municipality to collect the charge with property taxes.

Bill No. 3 is enabling, once again, Mr. Speaker. Municipalities can decide not to opt into the Yukon government program. Municipalities can also design, finance, and offer their own property-assessed clean energy programs, if they wish. They don't have to rely on the Yukon government. If they have the initiative and the desire, they can design their own programming and administer it themselves through the legislation we have before us today.

Mr. Speaker, we will work closely with the Association of Yukon Communities and municipal governments on the program details and agreements that enable this benefit to all Yukon citizens. We will work to address as many of their concerns about the administrative burden as we possibly can. This could include funds to offset the administrative task.

We will convene a working group with municipal officials to work through the details and potential agreement on how to launch the program in their taxing jurisdictions.

I thank the officials from the Department of Community Services and the Department of Justice for their incredible work in preparing this bill under trying conditions over the last two years. I commend Energy, Mines and Resources for their work to consider needs through a meaningful retrofit program. I also thank the many members of the Association of Yukon Communities and municipal governments for stating their general agreement with the overall intent of the program, and I look forward to working with them to address and offset the

associated administrative concerns to deliver this program to Yukoners.

Finally, I want to thank the Leader of the Third Party and her caucus for their support of the program. Yukoners have asked us to work together, and today, we have demonstrated that we can do that for the benefit of all Yukoners.

I now move that Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*, be read a second time.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this legislation today.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that we are where we are today with the legislation before us. This is legislation that has a noble concept and goal behind it. Assisting with the provision of energy retrofits to reduce our greenhouse gases is a cause that we support. However, despite the noble concept and the goals of this legislation, the Minister of Community Services has dropped the ball on actually consulting with the communities on this bill. As a result, the bill before us today is incomplete and flawed.

Now, the minister is trying to hang his hat on the fact that he will consult with communities after the fact, but the problem for him is that, to date, his actions indicate that he will not consult with communities afterward. For example, there is currently a legal requirement for the minister to consult with communities prior to proposing amendments to the *Municipal Act*, and just to quote from section 11 of the *Municipal Act* — and I quote: “The Government of Yukon must consult with the Association of Yukon Communities on any direct amendments that a Minister proposes to this Act.”

Despite this legal requirement to consult communities, AYC has confirmed that this did not occur with this piece of legislation. As the old saying goes, Mr. Speaker, the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour, and the past behaviour of this Minister of Community Services has been to not actually consult with communities. In fact, it was not until about two weeks ago, when he realized that his lack of communication and working with communities might result in the failure of this legislation, that he began to frantically call and apply pressure to our municipal representatives.

This “go it alone” approach has resulted in several letters from various municipalities indicating to the government that, while they support the concept of the program, they want the government to actually consult with them on the design of the program before it gets rammed through. We have seen the Association of Yukon Communities, Teslin, Watson Lake, and Mayo all send letters raising a number of concerns and asking for this to be deferred. We have also seen a strongly worded letter from the previous Mayor of Whitehorse — who, as a happenstance, also ran for the Liberals in the last spring election — outlining the City of Whitehorse’s concerns with the legislation and the lack of consultation that occurred. More recently, the large majority of the new Whitehorse City Council has also indicated concern with the government’s lack of consultation and the number of outstanding questions about how the program will work.

These are important concerns to reflect on, as the delivery of the program proposed within this legislation is largely reliant on the municipalities to deliver. They are essential partners, and the success of the program depends on them being comfortable and having their concerns addressed. A strong partnership does not start with one level of government refusing to consult until the eleventh hour. A strong partnership will not work when the Minister of Community Services made disparaging remarks about the concerns of municipalities in this Legislative Assembly just a few short weeks ago, in October, which he was later forced to apologize for.

It is entirely the approach of this minister that has led this legislation, which should otherwise have been a slam dunk, teetering on the brink of failure today. The only thing saving this bill is the commitment that I believe I heard the minister make to hold off on bringing this forward and that this bill won’t be passed this fall, which I am sure must be very disappointing to his colleagues and to the Liberal Party.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation is a marquee and defining piece of the Liberal government’s agenda, and its failure to pass this fall would represent a stunning indictment of this minister’s combative and vindictive approach. The most unfortunate part of this is, as I have stated, that all municipalities and all the opposition parties agree with the concept of the better buildings program. If the minister had done the proper consultation over the last several months to address the outstanding concerns of the municipalities, then he would have gotten them all onside.

He would have had the mayors in the gallery this afternoon clapping and cheering as this bill received unanimous support, because everyone wants this to go ahead. The mayors and councils are strongly insisting that the government hit the pause button and address these outstanding concerns before passing the legislation.

We are glad to hear the minister admit his approach was flawed and that he is willing to hit the pause button and bring this bill back in the spring — that is, once he has had a chance to do his homework, Mr. Speaker.

This is what municipalities, including my own, have asked for, because they have concerns. These are legitimate concerns and should not be so easily dismissed by the Minister of Community Services — the minister responsible for fostering good relationships with the communities. This should have been an easy win for the minister and the government. Instead, through his own actions, the minister has caused this delay while straining relationships with our municipalities.

We will be voting against this bill until such time as the minister does his job and actually listens to communities. We hope that he and his colleagues will rethink their approach to this and go back to the table with the communities and actually work with them.

Ms. Tredger: I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to address this. I believe my colleagues will have further statements on this bill, but in the meantime, I would like to address a couple of the comments I have heard so far on the floor here.

The Minister of Community Services asked: “What is not to like?” about this program. If we are talking about home retrofits, that would be an easy thing to answer. There is nothing not to like about home retrofits. There is nothing not to like about climate action, but we are not talking about that; we are talking about a very specific piece of legislation that is going to have consequences for communities across the Yukon — administrative consequences.

One of the most compelling things I heard, as we talked about this bill, is: What happens if people default on these loans? Are we going to put the burden on tiny municipalities to seize the homes of their constituents, to seize the homes of their friends, families, and neighbours? This is just one example of the sort of consequences that this bill could have, if it goes forward. There are solutions to these; we can work together to find solutions, but that hasn’t been the approach thus far. As my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake, said, past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour.

I think that is a fair thing to say, and I think that it is fair to have concerns when you haven’t been consulted. To hear that: “Well, it’s okay, because it will be different in the future” — I think that we need evidence for that to be true.

So, I think that municipalities have every right to be concerned about agreeing to a program that they haven’t seen the details of yet.

Another thing that I would like to follow up on is the idea that there will be no obligation for communities to opt in, and I think that is a bit disingenuous. I think that it is important for communities — to put communities in the position of denying their constituents the ability to participate in a program like this is, again, a very, very unfortunate position to put municipalities in, because everyone wants this program to work. Everyone wants to have the opportunity to participate in it, but it needs to be done right; it needs to be done with the consent of all the parties involved. It needs to be done with leadership; it needs to be done with collaboration.

You know, Yukoners are pretty cool people. There are a lot of great things to say about Yukoners. I think that one thing that Yukoners really hate is having things forced on them. I think that Yukoners really hate being told that this is how it has to be. This is an example of the government’s approach. This is not the first time they have taken that approach of forcing things on communities that are unprepared for it, but I do hope that it will be the last. I am an eternal optimist.

I think that we are in a kind of complicated situation where we have this bill — everyone agrees with the intent, but there are real concerns that the municipalities have, and we need time for them to be addressed, and we need time for them to be carefully considered and to find solutions that work for everybody. Something that I really believe is that people know what they need, people know what is best for them, and people know what they need to make something like this work, and that applies to municipalities. They know what they need in order to deliver this program successfully. We need to listen to them; we need to listen to them without pressure; we need to listen to them openly; we need to listen to them without legislation already enacted that can no longer be changed.

I think it was really telling when the minister said that the details will come. How can we vote on a program when we don’t know the details? How can we be expected to support something if the details are coming?

I am really pleased to hear that it is going to come back in the spring. I think that this is a really excellent solution, because that will give municipalities time to have their concerns addressed, to work collaboratively — truly collaboratively, not collaboratively with a stick coming behind, but real collaboration. We very much look forward to supporting this, going forward, as it comes forward in the spring.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the comments of my colleagues so far and the comments from the Minister of Community Services. I would say that there would be some similarity of my content, but certainly, there will be a different approach perhaps.

Yukoners know that there is a climate crisis. Mr. Speaker, they know it because they are feeling the impacts of climate change first-hand. Whether it be the unprecedented flooding Yukoners saw this past summer or the continued natural disasters our neighbours in BC are dealing with, we cannot hide from this reality. The Yukon and the north are warming significantly faster when compared to provinces in the south. Precipitation is projected to increase and become more variable. The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was clear: Climate change is happening now and it is caused by human activity. Every jurisdiction, regardless of how small, has a role to play in reducing emissions and combatting the climate crisis.

Reducing emissions is essential to ensure a safe, resilient, and prosperous future for Yukoners now and for generations to come. One of the most important ways that Yukoners can reduce their emissions is through smarter, more efficient heating sources and through retrofitting our existing building stock. Yukoners, of course, are no strangers to cold weather. We have proven ourselves to be innovative in finding heating solutions.

Many Yukoners rely on a variety of heating sources, from electric heat, wood stoves, biomass, and now electric thermal storage systems, to heat their homes and businesses.

As you have heard so far, Madam Deputy Speaker, Bill No. 3 represents an opportunity to provide Yukoners with the tools they need to transition to more efficient heating sources and to retrofit both housing and our general building infrastructure. This will save Yukoners money in the long run and will reduce their individual carbon footprints.

Improving heat retention and energy efficiency is vital for lowering emissions in the territory. *Our Clean Future* commits to 29 actions that support emissions reductions in existing buildings and in the construction of new buildings, with the focus on improving heat retention and energy efficiency.

Not only do these investments help us to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, but they also help our communities become more climate resilient. Bill No. 3 allows municipalities to opt in, should they choose, and allows Yukoners to access funding at the lowest interest rate in Canada to support energy-

efficient retrofits to their homes or businesses. Bill No. 3 is a key step in supporting *Our Clean Future* actions to lower emissions in our homes and buildings.

As everyone in this House and all Yukoners well know, Yukon experienced record-level floods this year, and we are witnessing the extreme weather events that our neighbours in British Columbia have dealt with and are currently dealing with — suffering the effects of devastating wildfires and historical floods, all within six months of the same year. Seeing the news this morning, we're advised that a lot of the Lower Mainland has received more than double the usual precipitation in November. The areas to the eastern end of the Lower Mainland — Hope and to points east — received approximately 600 millimetres of precipitation in November. The situation in southern British Columbia this week demonstrates the destructive impact that climate change is having and will continue to have on people, homes, businesses, critical infrastructure, and the environment.

As we have heard this afternoon and in the news, a few short weeks ago, countries came together in Glasgow for COP 26. Coastal and island nations shared testimonials of communities being inundated with rising sea levels. Countries closer to the poles provided imagery of dramatic permafrost thaw and receding glaciers. Others shared news of huge wildfires, desertification, and biodiversity loss.

A collective global approach is required. Commitments such as the recently agreed upon Glasgow climate pact are critical in reducing global emissions and keeping average global warming below 1.5 degrees by 2030.

It may, in fact, be too late already, a lot of climate scientists advise. However, Canada and its jurisdictions play a key role in meeting these ambitious targets. Our country played a pivotal role in negotiating this new pact, which includes phasing down fossil fuel subsidies as well as a requirement to phase down coal power.

Mr. Speaker, you will know that very significant coal-fired power plants are still being put on line in India, in China, and in Russia as well. There certainly are huge challenges there. Let's not fool ourselves. We know that, in fact, many countries advocated for wording that included a "phase out" of both fossil-fuel subsidies and coal power, but not unpredictably, nearly 200 signatory countries could not agree on that stronger language.

There were also new commitments to the allocation of resources for loss and damages experienced by countries experiencing climate change right now.

Although small on a global perspective, the Yukon is a piece of this puzzle. Implementing the actions in *Our Clean Future* and the recently announced Yukon Climate Leadership Council clearly demonstrates the Yukon's leadership in tackling climate change. We need to prioritize climate change in our decision-making and in our role in reducing emissions.

To quote probably the world's most prominent youth climate activist, Greta Thunberg: "And the question we must now ask ourselves is: 'What is it that we are fighting for?'"

"Are we fighting to save ourselves and our living planet? Or are we fighting to maintain business as usual?"

"Our leaders say we can have both, but the harsh truth is that that is not possible in practice. The people in power can continue to live in their bubble, filled with fantasies like eternal growth on a finite planet, and technological solutions that will suddenly appear, seemingly out of nowhere, and will erase all of these crises, just like that. All this, while the world is literally burning, on fire. And while the people living on the front lines are still bearing the brunt of the climate crisis.

"They can continue to ignore the consequences of their inaction, but history will judge them poorly and we will not accept it.

"We don't need any more distant non-binding pledges. We don't need any more empty promises. We don't need any more commitments that are full of loopholes and incomplete statistics that ignore historical emissions and climate justice.

"Yet, that is all we are getting. And no, that is not radical to say. Just look at their track record. They have had 26 COPs, they have had decades of blah, blah, blah. And where has that led us?"

"Over 50% of all our CO₂ emissions have occurred since 1990 and about a third since 2005. All this while the media is reporting on what people in power say they are going to do, rather than what they actually do."

Mr. Speaker, it is time for decision makers to do what we say we are going to do. The administrative burden of this new program is not a compelling reason to oppose this legislation. I have heard the concerns raised, certainly. I am listening, but this is an opt-in program where municipalities can choose to participate or not.

Importantly, as well, I understand that this program would also be administered by our government — by the Yukon government — to Yukoners living in unincorporated Yukon communities like Grizzly Valley, Shallow Bay, Ibex Valley, Destruction Bay, Mendenhall, Tagish, Braeburn, and Marsh Lake.

We have also heard from my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, that all efforts will be made by the Yukon government to assist all Yukon municipalities in order to facilitate the successful implementation of this program.

Action H3 of the *Our Clean Future* road map directs our government to provide low-interest financing to support energy-efficiency retrofits to homes and buildings beginning in 2021. I certainly heard where this bill is likely to go.

I certainly encourage those further discussions to occur and for the ongoing consultation and support to occur with all Yukon communities, but the time is now. This is exactly what this bill proposes that we do, and if we don't move reasonably quickly on *Our Clean Future* action item H3, we are at risk of falling behind our stated goals to reach our 2030 objectives.

Mr. Speaker, we can make significant headway by reducing emissions where we can, and we can do that today. We have heard often in this House that, in Yukon, it is estimated that approximately 75 percent of our greenhouse gas emissions come from heating and transportation. In my view, this retrofit program is candidly relatively low-hanging fruit as there is most certainly heavier lifting ahead.

The question then becomes: Are we committed to substantially reducing emissions? The confidence and supply agreement unequivocally says yes, and we know now that both the Yukon Party and the Yukon NDP support all elements of this agreement. Our government and the Third Party have agreed on the urgency to address the climate crisis. Together with the Third Party, we have ambitious goals to reduce Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions by 45 percent below 2010 levels by 2030. I look forward to continuing to work with the Third Party, and specifically with the Member for Whitehorse Centre, to work to achieve these necessary goals in our work with the Yukon Climate Leadership Council. We will almost certainly fail in achieving these goals if we continue to play politics on enabling legislation that will meaningfully reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. Will we still be playing the blame game by 2030? I hope, for the sake of all Yukoners, that the answer to that is an unequivocal no.

Mr. Speaker, we are out of time.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, it is sometimes a fascinating route how we get to places, and today I can tell you that I am really pleased to say that I am in a different spot than I would have been had there not been a willingness of my Liberal colleagues to work together to see a different outcome.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it is one of those things — when you have conversations with municipal leaders and they all say that they understand the importance and believe in the importance of retrofits, but it is also important to hear when they say that they had concerns. They had concerns. Ministers can list out consultation meetings, they can list out conversations, and they can list out actions, but really, things like this are relationships. I am relieved to know that today — I hope that what is happening right now between the Minister of Community Services and his department and municipalities is the beginning of a new relationship — it will be different and that there is a willingness to work together.

I spent a good portion of yesterday calling the mayors — municipal leaders. There are seven in the territory, and I spoke to each of them because I wanted to get an idea of where they were at. I am relieved to say that today, with the agreement that has been struck, we are going to debate this in second reading and that the Minister of Community Services is committing to going out and working with municipalities to develop the regulations for this program and then to bring this bill back for Committee of the Whole and third reading in the spring.

To me, this is an incredible success. It means that municipalities who understand the importance of retrofits and how critical they are — we had the Minister of Highways and Public Works talking about the importance. No one disputes the importance of retrofits. I have stood in this House for 10 years, and I have talked about all of the programs that I have accessed. It started with the Yukon Housing Corporation. I borrowed \$35,000 and put six inches of insulation on my house. I talked about how \$35,000 wasn't enough. Just prior to the 2016 election, that program expanded up to \$50,000, and so I paid some off and I accessed that full amount. Guess what I put in my house? An air-source heat pump — because you need

people at the beginning of these things to make sure that they work and to make sure that the technology makes sense here. I was so committed to it that I have a relationship with the Energy Solutions Centre because they monitor my heat pump. I signed up to the Yukon Energy Corporation's hot-water tank program, but unfortunately, because of COVID, the company that they had signed up with went under. So, no one disputes the importance of retrofits, especially me.

At this point in time, I sit here having paid just about \$75,000 to make my house more energy efficient. My house was built in 1958 by the army. Let me tell you that, in 1958, they didn't really care about insulation and the army was paying the fuel bill. I can tell you that when I bought the house in 2012, I cared about insulation and I cared about the fuel bill.

I feel like what has happened is that there has been a compromise. I did not want to see this bill die today. I did not want to see the potential of this program die today. I did everything in my power to make sure that wouldn't happen, so I am grateful that my pleas were heard and that what I was offering was accepted. I tabled a letter today highlighting the Yukon NDP's commitment to Bill No. 3, with our expectation that the Liberal government work with communities to develop those regulations together.

There is a long laundry list of things that I could highlight as the problems that I had, but we're not having that debate right now because a compromise has been reached. I want to talk about the potentials, and I want to talk about the future. I know that municipal councils believe in the importance of climate change and climate action. Not a single person I spoke to yesterday didn't recognize the importance of building retrofits, but they all had questions. I am very proud to say that there is this opportunity now for the Yukon government to work with the Association of Yukon Communities and officials to develop a program that works for everybody, and I think that this is a success. It is an example of how we can work together in this House. It is an example of how one level of government can work with other levels of government, and I think that this is important.

Today I tabled the letter saying that we would be supporting the second reading of this bill today, and we will, but we have expectations. We have expectations that the Yukon government will be working with municipal governments. We have expectations that those conversations — although they won't be easy — will continue. They are important. We look forward to seeing the regulations come in the spring. We look forward to understanding what a better building program is as opposed to just a title that has been used in advertising. I want to see the meat on those bones. I want to understand what the program is. Today there is a real opportunity for that.

I want to remind my colleagues in this House that we all have a responsibility of supporting the municipalities around us. If we believe in government-to-government relationships, we need to make sure that we do it in a respectful way, that it is not downloaded, and that it's done together. I think that there is an opportunity for that now.

I thank my colleagues for that opportunity to work together. I am looking forward to this coming back in the spring. With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I have just a few comments that I would like to put on the record as we debate this bill. First of all, I want to commend those folks who have done the early work on this at Community Services with the support of Energy, Mines and Resources. Upon the 2016 election, one of the major commitments was to look at the tens of millions of dollars that could be invested into retrofits, understanding that this was something that we felt would make some of the biggest impacts. Again, it would reduce our energy use. Having spent some time working with Yukon Energy Corporation and now working alongside the minister who is responsible for that, we know just how fragile things are when it comes to energy. It is important for us to make sure that we have the best use of the energy that we have. We have had a growing economy and a growing population, so that brings challenges.

As my colleague touched on, we want to ensure that we are using money to the best of our ability when it comes to climate change. So, as stated earlier, doing a retrofit on a home and a building is much more feasible than building more infrastructure to produce energy.

There were a couple of comments made, and I just want to get on the record with this. In 2019, I spent time on the road with the previous Minister of Community Services, now the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, going out to rural Yukon. Normally, how we would handle those meetings is that there would be a number of items that would be priorities for Community Services and then there would be a number of items that would be talked about from Energy, Mines and Resources. I think that it is important to say that I sat during the exchange and this dialogue. I am not saying that everybody walked away with every question answered, but I was party to those discussions and to the exchanges that happened with municipal officials and discussions about what a program like this would look like.

I think that the current minister was coming into a situation where there was a lot of dialogue that had taken place. I don't know if it was with every municipality. I can say that I sat in on a number of meetings and I did see good dialogue around this topic.

I think that the other thing that is important to say is that, although it is a new program that focuses on retrofits, we have similar programs that exist, and so I urge members of the Third Party, as we get ready to go into the spring — and there were a number of questions posed about what is going to happen, if municipalities are going to take on this risk that is connected to the retrofit, and how we are going to handle this — to get their research done.

I would direct them in two ways. First of all, our well-drilling program is a good one, because I can remember the Member for Lake Laberge, about a decade ago, coming in to meet with members of the City of Whitehorse and having discussions about that, saying, “I have constituents who are just before the Takhini bridge, inside the City of Whitehorse, inside

the municipality, and we need to figure out how we can support those folks.”

As I understand it, in 2015, I think, there was work done by the previous government and I believe that Mayor Brodie at the time had spoken publicly about that and it was really about trying to get a number of municipalities to work with the Yukon government on that item. I know that it took a number of years — originally starting with the Member for Lake Laberge representing his constituents and then, I think, probably more broadly. Others could speak to this better. So, I do think that this exists — and a mechanism like that.

The other one, I would say, is the rural electrification. As I understand it, individuals work with the Yukon Energy Corporation, the Yukon Development Corporation, and Community Services, I believe. In that program, I think that folks can leverage up to 25 percent of the value of their home, and then they can use that and invest that into the infrastructure that they need to electrify their homes, and I think that they can use that, as well, for telecommunications, if I remember correctly.

These programs exist, and I think that they have worked well, from what I understand. I am certainly open to be corrected, but that's my recollection. Spending some time with officials back in 2019 and spending time with my colleague and going through different iterations of how to make sure that we can make the best impact around retrofits — these are some of the things that were contemplated — these previous programs — and he could probably speak to it much better than I can.

I also believe that we have to take into consideration what this not only does for our energy use, but what it does for our economy. As municipalities feel comfortable and they come on board with this — the same with other rural LACs — what we're going to see is just a real spreading out of economic opportunity in areas — whether it's construction for capital projects, maybe shared infrastructure, municipal infrastructure, First Nation infrastructure, homes — and maybe there is mining activity and maybe there is tourism activity, depending on that community. But I think that this can be a very significant impact to communities. Homes are healthier, they are using less energy, they are lasting longer, and all the while it's creating very localized job opportunities. We know — we discuss it all the time; we debate it here — that there's a need for housing, so I think that, when you take into consideration some of the key skill sets, you are really providing more opportunities for contractors, carpenters, and subtrades to continue to flourish in those communities and to have more opportunities. So, it's not just maybe one or two big capital projects, but now they are doing retrofits, and they are still, of course, having opportunities to build out other contracts for the private sector or for governments or having the opportunity to just increase the scope of work that they can do in their community. I think that this is a very positive thing.

The minister touched on the fact that folks can opt in — and I think there was some rebuttal around that. My interpretation of that is that it's not about a municipality being put in position to feel uncomfortable because other municipalities — I'm trying to be very sensitive on the words

that I'm using. Every municipality is going to be in a different place on priorities; they are going to be in a different place on capacity. There are things they might be working on now, and that is what's driving how they are identifying their priorities.

I will give you a great example: the work that is being done by municipalities now on incentivizing affordable housing. Look at the municipal grants that are provided. That was something, from my recollection, that was started in Whitehorse and, through the discussions — whether it be at the Association of Yukon Communities' table or just through discussions with colleagues — we saw municipality by municipality take that on when they were ready. We all know that affordable housing was an absolutely significant and extremely important issue. It wasn't that municipalities felt that, by not adopting that right away, they were going to be frowned upon, because, of course, every community needs affordable housing.

I think that their constituents and Yukoners were understanding that, when municipalities were ready, they could take that on. My sense, from what the minister said, was that some municipalities will be better prepared. They might have a bigger staff; they might have bigger teams of public servants. I think that all those things are factors that we have to take into consideration when municipalities take this on.

My colleague, who did this as an academic, looked at different ways to adapt around climate change. I think that most municipalities — not every one — have adaptation plans. I think that there is a wide range of items. All of that drives priorities within organizations — and even more now, after seeing what we have experienced in the Yukon this past year and what our neighbours are experiencing yesterday, today, in previous weeks, and during the summer in British Columbia.

I think that we are going in the right direction. I think that the collaboration, as was touched upon by members of the opposition, is a good thing. I think that it is always a challenge when there are a number of new municipal elected officials and they are getting their feet under them — and, of course, this gives an opportunity for greater dialogue on the topic. My sense has always been that we want to get to a place where the regulations, of course — this piece of legislation is only a few pages, but the greater detail of the relationship and the bilateral agreement is really anchored in the regulations.

There will be some good work done over the winter. We all get that coming together to work on things in a collaborative, parallel effort, with some common ground, is always where folks want to go. I don't think that this is a unique situation. I think that it is work that everyone tries to do every day. It is not always possible, but I think that it is what everyone hopefully strives to do every day.

Again, Mr. Speaker, thank you for letting me put a couple of comments on the record. I am glad that we are going to see this legislation and have a greater discussion about it in the spring of 2022. I think that it is extremely important that we have this in place. I think that there are a lot of Yukoners who are going to be very excited with this opportunity to use a program with such cheap money — “cheap money” is an economic term — and then, of course, rolling that into an

opportunity for a significant return on investment based on money that they put into their assets.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: This is a really important piece of legislation. I have heard several members here today talk about the importance of this legislation. I want to thank everyone who has talked about its importance. I also want to thank municipalities that have said that this is important.

When you look at us as a territory and where we are using energy, especially fossil fuels, and creating greenhouse gas emissions, the number one sector is transportation. Number two is heat. I think about one-fifth of our emissions are from that sector alone. Of course, going forward nowadays as we build new homes, we know to build them better insulated and more energy efficient. Let's do that so that we don't need as much energy. I remember when, about 15 years ago, the community of Old Crow reached out to me in my engineering climate capacity and asked me about the heating of homes and what the best solution was, so whether it should be bringing in the high-efficiency, Toyo-stove style of heat or to harvest willow nearby and to use wood. My answer to them was to insulate. If we insulate, then we don't need the energy. This is what's so beautiful about these types of solutions.

Yesterday, I tabled Efficiency Canada's report for the Yukon. Mostly, it's about the provinces. If you follow the link in the one sheet that I tabled, you will see all of this information about the provinces. One of the big conversations that they have is around buildings and how to make them more efficient.

It's easy to understand that when you build a new building, we now know to put a little more money in it and it will cost a lot less over time, but we weren't doing that so much. I think that the Member for Takhini-Kopper King talked about the old army construction and that insulation was really not big on the list.

When I was elected into this Chamber — I think we were sworn in five years ago — this building here was being energy retrofitted. We looked at, first of all, government buildings, institutional buildings, and how we could make them more efficient. We also worked with municipalities and First Nation governments on how to get them funding to make their buildings more energy efficient, and I began to work on this issue because our building stock isn't just these big buildings; it is each of our homes and it is our businesses. So, how do we help them to get these improvements as well?

There is a reason for this. You can get good payback on this. Once you have made that investment — yes, it costs some dollars up front, but it pays back over time. The longer that you have the building, the more it pays back.

We built on the work of the Energy Solutions Centre to try to look at residential and commercial homes. They have programs where they incentivize Yukoners to access some funds to improve the efficiency of their homes. They are a terrific shop, and that's a good place to start.

As the Member for Porter Creek South just said, in 2019 — in the time that I was Minister of Community Services, I tried to make it to every municipality and community twice a year. I started having these conversations about working

together to bring in a program that would help to get to citizens' homes and businesses.

In the 2019 throne speech in the fall, two years ago, there was just a reference. It wasn't about which program we would run; it was about this is good to get to — to move from our institutional buildings to homes and businesses. Then I went back and began my conversation in earnest with the Association of Yukon Communities. The thing that I talked to them about was a program called the "property assessed clean energy program". It has an acronym and I am going to use it today. It is called the "PACE program" — property assessed clean energy. This is used across Canada. I will, just for a second, list off some of the places where I know that it is being used, and in these places, it is run entirely by the municipalities: Toronto, Saanich, Rocky Mountain House, Devon, Saskatoon, Halton Hills, Vaughan, Guelph, Ottawa, Stratford, Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown, Wolfville, Bridgewater, Amherst, Digby, Lunenburg, Barrington, Yarmouth, New Glasgow, Cumberland County, Inverness County — in fact, there is a PACE Maritimes program that is set up. It is used across the provinces and across North America. It is a great program.

I have a quote here from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' president, Garth Frizzell — or at least he was at the time — and I quote: "Canadians want new ways to make their homes energy efficient and affordable. Through this expanded funding offer, the FCM's Green Municipal Fund is enabling more local action that can help achieve Canada's climate change goals. GMF has the frontline expertise to empower municipalities, big and small, to get results on the ground. Today's announcement with our federal partners helps communities of all sizes build better lives for Canadians with more energy-efficient homes."

So, we have this program, which is being used across the country, and we have the Energy Solutions Centre here, and I went and had a conversation with the Association of Yukon Communities. In February 2020, I sat down — I typically met with the association president in one-on-one meetings four times a year, and I met with the full association four additional times a year. I met with then-president Tara Wheeler.

I talked about how this program is used across the country and how the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, which the Association of Yukon Communities is a part of, said, "Here is a great program." What I heard back that day was: "How about the Yukon Housing Corporation?" I said, "Okay" and pressed pause. I came out of that meeting and went back and formed a working group with the Yukon Housing Corporation, with Energy, Mines and Resources — because they have the Energy Solutions Centre — and with Community Services, and I asked us to do some due diligence around this and to look at the Yukon Housing Corporation, because the Association of Yukon Communities asked us to. We went off and did that work.

We took a look at it and came back and said that the PACE program, through local improvement charges, is better than trying to use Yukon Housing Corporation. There were basically three reasons. The first one was that, if you go with Yukon

Housing Corporation, we could get to homes, but if we went with the PACE program and local improvement charges, we could get to people's homes and commercial business properties, so that was a big difference. Then we looked at how the loans would be affixed. If we went through Yukon Housing Corporation, the loans are to a person — an individual — but if you use the PACE program, they are affixed to the property so that when you sell the property, the improvement and any outstanding debt is sold with it. There are far fewer defaults on those types of loans.

The third reason was kind of the kicker. The Department of Community Services explained to me that the interest rates we could get for the PACE program were much, much better than the rates through the Yukon Housing Corporation. The current Minister of Community Services recently gave me those numbers again. It's 0.25 percent interest if you use something like the local improvement charges and the PACE program — what we are proposing here today in this bill — or it's 2.5 percent if you go through the Yukon Housing Corporation. It's a huge difference. Those are really big reasons. You would get more security through the PACE program, more flexibility, and more breadth. They were just really big reasons.

I went back to the Association of Yukon Communities and explained that this is a better program. Then I said to them that we want to do this with them. They said that they were worried — which we have talked about now — about this download. I am going to try to talk about it a little bit.

The program here would not be the same as it is run in the rest of the country. Here, it is the Energy Solutions Centre, Energy, Mines and Resources, which would do the interaction with the folks, would go out and do the testing, and would see whether there is an advantage to retrofitting or not, how much advantage, and then would come back, and we would loan the money, and then the last step is the repayment of the loan as per the terms that would be signed, and that needs to be the taxing authority. We, the Yukon government, are the taxing authority in many communities that are unincorporated — in all the communities that are unincorporated. So, we think this is good for Yukoners, but we didn't want to burden the municipalities, so we're working with them to deal with that.

We talked about what kind of solutions we could have. I know that there were — each time I had a new meeting with the Association of Yukon Communities, some would come back and say, "Hey, how about Yukon Housing Corporation?" I would go back, and I would say, "Yes, we looked at it, and it's not as good. It's not as good."

We want to come forward in all of unincorporated Yukon; we want to make it available for you in municipalities. We think it's a good program, but we will not force you to do it.

Let me talk about this act for a second and just quote from it. Here it says under — well, it's talking about amendments to the *Municipal Act*, and we would change it to add in: "A municipality and the Government may agree in writing to make the retrofitting buildings program available in the municipality."

Then, just a couple paragraphs later: “The Government may construct a local improvement under the retrofiting buildings program in any municipality that is a party to a retrofiting buildings program agreement...”

So, no one is required to do this. This is enabling legislation. It’s about creating the possibility, but it would allow us, in unincorporated areas, to start. And voting against it, of course, will not allow that.

Okay, after that, I went on a fall tour. I went to every community. There are eight municipalities. I spoke to every one of them, and all of them said, “This is a good program; we need to have this conversation with our officials.” I said, “Okay, they’re probably going to say to you that there is this download on the collection side, so let’s talk that out.”

What hasn’t come out is a couple points, because I’ve heard some folks — I heard the Member for Watson Lake saying that there was a refusal to consult. I hope I’m getting it across that, in every meeting I’ve had over the past two years with municipalities, we have talked about this. In fact, I had a weekly meeting with the president, Mayor Gord Curran. I have a lot of respect for the AYC and the work they do and the presidents that I have worked with, including councillor Wheeler and Mayor Curran, and in our weekly calls, there were always two subjects that we talked about: One was COVID, and one was better buildings.

Coming up to this spring, as part of our commitment under *Our Clean Future*, we said, “Let’s get to this program; it’s a really important program; let’s get it in.” We put it in *Our Clean Future* as a commitment to get done this year, and the president of AYC approached me and asked me to please not bring in this legislation in the spring. And the president asked me to hold off for a bit now, that we need to have more dialogue. And I said okay, and we pushed it to this fall. Today, we are going to do the same thing, because we really want municipalities to be on board.

I do want to note for everybody here that we have met extensively and talked often and deeply about this issue. That doesn’t mean that we always agree or that there are not hard conversations to have — there are — but we are working together, have worked together, and everybody agrees that this is the right thing to do. So, what we’ve said all along is that we should find a way to make this a win-win for municipalities, to make it more than fair for municipalities.

I also need to note for us that, as we push this, we lose something, too. We lose that ability — voting against this today is basically saying, “Sorry, no” to Lake Laberge, no to Haines Junction — who said that they would like to go — no to Beaver Creek, no to Marsh Lake, no to Mount Lorne, no to Carcross, no Tagish, and no to Pelly. It’s going to be unfortunate for me, if I hear a “no” vote, because what I also heard from the Official Opposition is that they believe in this program and they believe it is important to engage, which I think I have given ample evidence of. It doesn’t mean that we always agree, but it does mean that we have, for a couple of years now, been working to find this solution, and when we have new elections, I listen to Whitehorse City Council. I would love to sit down with the councillors. I would love to talk them through why this is a

good program, why it is a good program for the City of Whitehorse, and how we have engaged on it and what we want to do to try to find solutions.

The Member for Porter Creek South was talking about the rural well program. I can tell you that municipalities have said to me that they are worried about the support around the rural well program. I said, “Perfect; now is the time when we can try to sort that out. As we deal with this new solution, we can try to fix that one, too.”

What I said to them at all times is that we want a solution that is more than fair. Voting “no” today says this is not urgent. It says that we don’t care about these other communities, these unincorporated communities. Voting “yes” today doesn’t say you have to do it; it says, “Let’s work together to do it.”

The part that I think is missing in all this conversation is the public. When I talk to the public, they would like to retrofit.

By the way, I heard the Member for Whitehorse Centre talk about the risks of this stuff. When you do these retrofits — if you get the right buildings — you actually can have more energy savings than the dollars that you would be paying back for that loan, where we’re just missing that loan, those dollars, so there could actually be an advantage. Certainly, after the five, 10, or 15 years they choose to pay back the loan, after then, it is all gravy, right? Because you are still getting that energy savings every year after that. That’s why this is so important.

All of that work would happen through the Energy Solutions Centre, which is different from how it’s done in other provinces.

I am a huge supporter of this. I have always been a huge supporter of municipalities. I will continue to be a huge supporter of our communities. I have worked tirelessly with them and will continue to do so, because I see them as partners. I believe that there is a solution for them. I am eager to work with the Minister of Community Services, working with those municipalities to find a good solution for them. I think there is one out there. Today, in our compromise — as per the letter that was tabled — after second reading, we will leave the bill on the Order Paper so that it is not passed, and we will wait for the spring. Gosh, this is an important program. It’s going to be good for Yukoners. I look forward to finding those solutions with municipalities.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you to my colleagues for their comments today. I hadn’t originally planned to speak to this, but through the course of today’s debate, I feel somewhat compelled to respond.

I want to start by speaking to the comments that the current Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has made. I think that he may be surprised to find that I agree with much of what he just said. I think that this program as conceptualized is a good one. I agree that retrofits are a good approach to reduce our energy needs and address our climate change actions. I think that working with municipalities is a good idea. I actually agree with the minister that he conducted some fairly sound consultation. I have talked to a number of municipal leaders, both mayors and councillors, who felt that the former Minister of Community Services — the current Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources — engaged with them meaningfully,

listened to them, and when they proposed something, he took it seriously, went back, and thought about it. He ably outlined some of that.

What I have heard is that where things have gone wrong is with the new minister, because with the new minister, that approach has not been here. What we have seen from the current minister has been an aggressive and adversarial approach, one that sees the minister calling mayors and councillors frantically over the last few weeks telling them that, if they don't support this legislation, they don't take climate change seriously, and also that, if they don't get on board with this, this whole project will die and we will never see action on this for years to come. All of these things simply were not only inappropriate, but they were not true. That's why I disagree with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources' point that a "no" vote on this is a vote against action, because, as we know, the Liberal government has admitted their faults here and reached this compromised agreement that I think was fairly benevolent of the Third Party to offer to them.

We are not going to see this action into the spring anyway, so when we say that we are not supporting this, it's not that we don't support the program idea. It's not that we don't support the notion of retrofits. It's not that we don't support what the former minister has done. We do not support and cannot countenance the approach taken by the current minister to bully his way in and try to table this legislation without talking to folks and waiting until the last minute to make calls to impress upon recently elected councillors that their input isn't taken seriously and, quite frankly, to provide information that I believe was inaccurate.

I also took note of the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation's comments about the rural well program, which I thought was a good point, because when we did the rural well program, it was something very similar to this bill that we have before us today. The notable difference, though, was that when we made changes to these very same acts to accommodate the changes to the rural well program, we actually worked with municipalities meaningfully. In fact, every municipality, after that was passed, supported this. I would note that, at the time, every political party supported that bill to make changes to the municipal and assessment and taxation acts, similar to what we see here today.

I think that if we look back, we can learn an instructive lesson about how this could have been better. When changes were made to make changes to the rural well program, the Yukon government put forward a number of options to municipalities, to the AYC, and said, "Which of these models do you want to move forward on?" The AYC provided feedback, and Yukon government then made legislative changes based on the feedback received from AYC. The result, Mr. Speaker, was that there was unanimous support. All municipalities got on board; all political parties got on board. It was a coup for the Yukon government; it was a coup for the Yukon citizens who got to access this program. I think that it was somewhat unheralded because of its success. It was something that has just become a normal course of business.

In this particular case, we see a unique circumstance where, because of the minister's approach — because of his adversarial approach — we have seen municipalities pushed with their back against the wall and they have to write letters to us, copying the leader of the Third Party and me, to explain their concerns and ask insistently for a pause and time to reflect. That's what we have always wanted to provide to them.

I told the AYC just a few weeks ago that I support the program; I just don't support the approach taken by the minister. I think that there needs to be more thorough consultation.

As I'm reminded by my colleagues, not only did the current minister offend several municipalities with his comments to them directly, but also it was no secret — and they all listened to the audio transcripts of the House where the current minister mocked municipalities for their concerns. Of course, my colleague put forward a motion urging him to apologize for those insulting comments that he made on the floor of the Legislature earlier this Sitting.

Whether or not the minister apologized is something that I will leave to him to explain, but I hope that he did because his comments were taken with quite a great deal of offence by a lot of municipalities.

There is a model before us. The rural well program is an example of one that could have been emulated. This is a project that has broad political support from the various political parties. The previous minister did a pretty good job of connecting with municipalities and engaging with them, seeking their input, responding to their input. When they asked for a pause and some time to reflect, he granted that. That has not been the approach that we have seen since the current minister came to the helm of this department. That's why we find ourselves in this situation.

I am pleased that the government has admitted that they are wrong and has agreed to back down, to leave this bill on the Order Paper until the spring. They have agreed to take the municipalities seriously and engage with them through working groups and other ways. I do look forward to the changes that the government will make in its approach.

If I can leave the government with a bit of advice, what I would suggest is that, rather than have the Minister of Community Services leading this work, I would recommend that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources lead this work in engaging with municipalities. I think that he will have a lot more success in building support among municipalities for what the government wants to do and building support for what should be a program broadly supported by many Yukoners and by all political parties.

We will be voting against this bill. We know that it is a symbolic vote more than anything because of the agreement reached between the Liberals and the NDP to postpone this bill until the spring. We are glad to see it coming back in the spring. Even if we had voted it down, the government could still have brought it back in the spring.

Of course, all that it would require would be unanimous support under our Standing Orders to bring forward a bill that has been voted down. Based on the comments from the NDP

and the Yukon Party, I think that there would have been no problem at all in achieving unanimous consent if the government is able to address the significant concerns of municipalities.

This notion that the minister has told to some municipalities — I noted in the letter that was tabled from the Mayor of Carmacks that the Mayor of Carmacks was led to believe that, if this didn't pass this fall, no action could ever be taken again and that this program would die. Of course, that was incorrect. We will leave it to the minister to explain why he provided that inaccurate information to the Mayor of Carmacks.

In the meantime, I encourage the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to take a leadership role in this work. I encourage him to work with the municipalities and build on the successful consultation that he had led over the last few years. I encourage the current minister to steer clear, because his approach to this has soured the water, has soured relationships with a number of municipal leaders, and I think that he has a done a great disservice to his government in his adversarial and vitriolic approach to this.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, we will be voting against this bill. I do look forward to seeing it come back in the spring. I'm sure that if the government lives up to the commitments that they have made to the NDP, we will be supporting the bill in the spring. Again, all of this is contingent on the government getting this work done, doing the hard work that it takes to build support among municipal leaders for whom this is a very important issue — and to not be so dismissive of the concerns that the municipalities have raised. With that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to bringing this back in the spring and seeing that program developed in 2022.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, today marks a victory for Yukoners. As legislators, some of us are working together to address climate change and reduce the cost of operating our homes and businesses. Today the Leader of the Third Party committed in writing to support this legislation at second reading this afternoon, and today the Leader of the Third Party committed in writing to support the passage of this through Committee of the Whole and third reading in the Legislature in the spring. I thank her for that unambiguous commitment.

Today we are taking real action on climate change for Yukoners. This is what Yukoners have asked us to do — to work together to solve the biggest issues facing society.

I appreciate the compliments that the Leader of the Official Opposition has for my colleague. I agree with him wholeheartedly. He is indeed a wonderful MLA and minister, and I count my blessings every day for the opportunity that I have had to work with him and indeed all of my colleagues on this side of the House.

Once again, though, I am having a hard time following the line of reasoning from the Leader of the Official Opposition.

He supports the program; he's voting against it now, but he will vote for it in the spring. Once again, in this House, the Yukon Party is going it alone. Today, they are still working against Yukoners.

The Yukon Party, of course, denied climate change was happening. It opposed a carbon tax. It refused to respect or work with First Nation governments. The Yukon Party supported fracking for gas in the Peel watershed in the north Yukon, so today the Yukon Party is still demonstrating its contempt for the environment and for taking action on climate change.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Order, please. The member has the floor.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Today, it will vote against a program that brings tangible benefits for Yukoners on climate change. It lowers the cost of heating their homes and businesses, and it improves the economy. It builds capacity in rural Yukon communities. We now know that the Yukon Party still does not support this climate change legislation and would like us to push it off indefinitely; however, I have to believe that the Member for Lake Laberge and the Member for Kluane have some support for these changes, since the better buildings program would be available to the majority of their constituents in Grizzly Valley, Ibex Valley, Braeburn, Mendenhall, Haines Junction, and Destruction Bay. If they vote against these legislative changes and essentially their constituents, I can only assume that the leader has asked them, as a collective, to vote against this and against their respective ridings.

When these changes pass in the Spring Sitting, we hope to have the better buildings loan program ready for the summer construction season, which, as I have said, will be an opt-in program. Let me say that again — it will be an opt-in program for municipalities. No municipality will be forced to do anything as a result of the changes we are proposing here today. What it will do, however, is allow us to deliver this program to unincorporated areas of Yukon, such as Marsh Lake, Ibex Valley, Tagish, Grizzly Valley, Destruction Bay, Mendenhall, Keno, and others. It will also allow us to work out an agreement with Haines Junction and Carmacks, which have already expressed their support for the program, so that they can partner with us to deliver these low-interest, energy-efficient loans to their residents.

For the remaining communities, we hope that some will come on board — maybe all of them — after we spend the next few months ironing out the details of the program and how best to address their lingering concerns. If we can't reach that agreement with all municipalities over the coming months, we will still continue to work with them to find a way to get them to opt into the program of their own volition.

I just want to acknowledge that action on climate change will never be easy, and it will never be free, and it will never be without some work. It will also never be without opposition, but we can't allow this to stop us from moving forward. We need to be strong and to push forward for what we know is right. We owe it to the generations coming up behind us. We should never have to explain to them that we could not act because it was too controversial or that it was too much of a burden.

I just want to, once again, thank the Leader of the Third Party and her caucus office for supporting these changes in the program that will be created. In my eyes, and I am sure in the eyes of most Yukoners, you have shown fortitude and given a firm “no” to inaction.

So, this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, we have heard the thoughts of Yukon politicians and the concerns of municipalities, but do you know whom we have not heard from this afternoon? The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, the Yukon Federation of Labour, the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce and its members, the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce and all of its members, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce and its members, the Yukon Conservation Society, residents of Carmacks, Haines Junction, Grizzly Valley, Marsh Lake, Tagish, Carcross, Destruction Bay, and all of unincorporated Yukon, all of Yukon’s First Nations — all of whom have been not only in support of this program, but also in support of dramatic action on climate change. This afternoon, we have actually taken a step. Our colleagues in the New Democrat caucus and us are taking action on climate change.

We also haven’t heard from George, Ryan, Gurdev, Sascha, Brenda, Christine, and Wayne — everyday Yukoners who are looking for a way to fix up their homes and lower their heating costs, who are asking for action on climate change. We haven’t heard from Lawson, Kalen, Mabel, and a host of other children. You can simply insert their names here, because there are literally hundreds of them who are going to inherit a world more dynamic and challenging than the stable, calm one that I rode my bike and skateboard and other various contraptions around the streets in five decades ago. Frankly, they are why we are here today. They are why we are talking about this today.

You have heard the extent of the conversations over this better building proposal over the last two years or so, both from my colleague and from my comments, my consultation, and my colleagues. And yet, the positions haven’t substantially changed. We heard from the outset that there is an administrative burden, and I understand that. I have immense respect for the Association of Yukon Communities — indeed, all communities — and the work that they do on behalf of Yukon citizens. I have heard the concerns, particularly the concern of the administrative burden, and I have committed to the association and to municipalities that we will deal with that problem.

I said it in every conversation I have had since I took this office. I said it to them in person and in their communities. I said it in writing to the association and to them, both former councillors and mayors and the current councillors and mayors. I said, without any qualification, that we want to deal with this problem and make sure that our municipalities are whole. That hasn’t changed in the six months that I have been in this role. It hasn’t changed in the two years that my colleague had this job. It hasn’t changed one iota.

I have never, ever considered the administrative burden a barrier, because I know that there are solutions to these problems. It will take talking together and coming up —

assessing what the real problem is. What is the burden? How do we deal with it? How much money? How many staff will it take to alleviate this problem for municipalities? That’s all it comes down to. We’re willing to work with them to do that. I have been absolutely crystal clear from the beginning about that, as has my colleague.

I don’t accept that this barrier is insurmountable in the least. It is something that we have to sit down, define, and deal with. I’m happy to do that over the coming months. I’m very glad we’re at this position, Mr. Speaker, where we can actually sit down, roll up our sleeves, and start working out these problems, actually defining what they are and work them through so that this program can be rolled out to Yukoners and we can start to tackle our greenhouse gas emissions and make our home and housing stock better for all.

As I’ve said, in an emergency, we have to assess the problems, solve them, and then deliver the programs to resolve them. All problems have solutions. We have to define them, and we have to find those solutions. In this case, we will find them, absolutely. I have no doubt.

We need to solve these problems, Mr. Speaker, and actually get on with the task of starting to drop our greenhouse gas emissions, because we have to prevent another Marsh Lake; we have to prevent more Lyttons; we have to do more to prevent more Chilliwacks.

Most important of all, we have to do it for Lawson, Kalen, Mabel, for their future.

Our government is committed to tackling climate change. With their clear and unfettered support for this bill, the NDP have shown a commitment to climate change. All Yukoners — indeed, all Canadians — are impacted by the climate emergency, and we need to work in partnership to meet the targets in this strategy, *Our Clean Future*.

To do that, we have to work together. We have to work together in this Legislative Assembly. We have to work together in our communities. We have to work together in this entire territory and across the country. Working together is what Yukoners asked us to do in the last election. That’s what some of us have pledged to do this afternoon. That’s a win for the climate; it’s a win for Yukoners and municipalities alike.

I look forward to working with municipalities and continuing the good work we are doing in partnership over the coming months — the good work and partnerships I have committed to and fostered since taking on this role earlier this year.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat and wish everybody a great afternoon.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.
Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.
Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.
Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.
Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.
Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.
Mr. Dixon: Disagree.
Mr. Kent: Disagree.
Ms. Clarke: Disagree.
Mr. Cathers: Disagree.
Ms. McLeod: Disagree.
Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.
Mr. Hassard: Disagree.
Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.
Ms. White: Agree.
Ms. Blake: Agree.
Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 10 yea, eight nay.

Speaker: The ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for second reading of Bill No. 3 agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. Blake): Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Chair: Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 202: *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Education — *continued*

Hon. Ms. McLean: Madam Chair, I would like to welcome back to the Legislative Assembly our officials for the

Department of Education, Deputy Minister Nicole Morgan and Andrea McIntyre, director of Finance. Thank you so much for being here again today for continuing debate on Vote 3 under Bill No. 202.

I have a number of legislative returns prepared that I will submit tomorrow, but I wanted to go over some of them today since I have a few minutes at the beginning of the debate today. Again, I will be submitting the ones that I am going over today, but also others that I likely will not get to, but may get to during the debate. I do understand that the Official Opposition is wanting to focus on early learning and childcare today. The answers that I am bringing forward today are with regard to debate that we have already had on Vote 3.

I am going to start with the Yukon First Nation school board trustee eligibility. There was a question that we have prepared a return for regarding voting eligibility for First Nation school board trustees. In June 2021, Government of Yukon announced and signed an agreement respecting education and the establishment of the First Nation school board in Yukon.

Again, as I speak about the First Nation school board, I really believe that Yukon's future prosperity will be built through strong partnerships with First Nations. This is especially true when it comes to education. Our government is committed to supporting all Yukon learners. Education is such a key area in our efforts toward reconciliation, so this is such an important piece of work that we're doing in the Department of Education. I just wanted to reiterate that.

Under the framework agreement, there are two clauses that I am going to go through. First, the residents of the board's education area will be those residents of the Yukon whose ancestral language is a First Nation language. In addition — this is another clause within the framework — to residents of the board's education area, any Yukon student in a community that is served only by a school operated by the board will have the right to be enrolled in the school, and the parents of such a school will be eligible to participate in board elections and be nominated to become a trustee in accordance with the act.

The Department of Education has interpreted the previous sections to mean that, for the initial First Nation school board trustee elections, only those residents of the Yukon whose ancestral language is a First Nation language will have the right to vote and run as trustees.

For the next and subsequent elections, with some restrictions, parents of students attending a school operated by the First Nation school board would have the right to vote and run for trustee. It is our understanding that the Chiefs Committee on Education shares our interpretation.

Yukon's Chief Electoral Officer has asked for greater clarity for the purpose of preparing for the election of trustees for the Yukon First Nation school board. We are currently working with the First Nation Education Directorate legal counsel and the Department of Justice to confirm whether our interpretation is correct. I wanted to bring that back, and this will also be returned tomorrow in a written form.

I want to move on to talk about a couple of other things that, of course, are very important and vital to where we are at

today with our preparation for the November 30 mandatory vaccination. This will be provided tomorrow, as well, in a legislative return, but I will just go over where we landed as of yesterday and probably a little bit today. Maybe some of these numbers are changing in real time.

This was a question around the staffing attestation numbers. Vaccination, of course, is the most effective way to limit the transmission of COVID-19 in Yukon schools. We can see right now the positive impacts of vaccination in our secondary schools, which have significantly less exposure notices.

I want to again thank Dr. Kancir and the entire team from the office of the chief medical officer of health and their work that they have done with us to set out the guidelines. I really appreciate the extra measures that we brought into place during the circuit breaker and that it has been effective. We are right now in a situation where we do not have any outbreaks in our schools. We certainly are reducing the number of notifications that are going out to various schools and classrooms.

As of November 30, 2021, 96 percent of employees of the Department of Education have completed their attestations. Most schools have experienced minimal impacts to operations from the implementation of the mandatory vaccination requirement. A small number of schools were able to minimize impacts by adjusting student learning groups or deploying teachers on call.

The Department of Education continues to closely monitor any potential impacts to operations due to unvaccinated employees. We are prepared to make operational adjustments as needed to ensure a minimal impact to schools. We, of course, continue to encourage employees on leave without pay to verify their vaccination status with us, attesting at least one dose. The requirement for mandatory vaccinations for all public servants is, of course, based on the recommendation of the acting chief medical officer of health and aligns with the measures being taken elsewhere around the country.

To increase vaccination rates and combat what we have right now, which is the Delta variant wave — and we know that there is another variant of concern in Canada — it is vitally important that we are taking all the steps that we can to ensure that our children are safe. I know that we are now preparing for the vaccination for five- to 11-year-olds that will start on December 6. Again, thank you to all of the health care workers who are working hard to fill all those spots to get our children vaccinated. As I have stated, Dr. Kancir and the other members of the office of the chief medical officer of health have certainly — when they were here as witnesses for the Legislative Assembly — talked about the effectiveness of vaccinations in our schools, and that is one of the key tools that we have to protect our children. We are really encouraging folks to work toward making that decision as the best decision for your family.

Going back to the schools in terms of our impacts, I wanted to just talk about some of the planning that took place and will continue to take place around mitigating the issues within the school as a result of the vaccine mandate. As I have stated, we have had minimal impacts. We have had many schools with

100-percent attestation. In terms of contingency plans, we will rely on and will consider a variety of options to ensure the continuation of learning in schools. Options may include, and have included, temporary adjustments to staff teaching assignments, adjustments to student learning groups, use of teachers on call to fill short-term needs, and temporary use of remote learning until staff can be recruited.

I want to thank all of our public servants for the work that they do in our schools each and every day. For those who have chosen to go on leave without pay, I absolutely thank all the folks who have committed their time to learning in the Yukon. I want to say thank you to all of those folks for everything that they have done for our students.

I encourage folks, if they choose to take that first dose, to do the attestation. That's still available to them.

There was another question around staffing in Old Crow. I will put this in writing tomorrow, but there are two teaching postings: an EA posting in Old Crow and one anticipated teacher posting. The principal role has been filled, which created a vacancy in the learning assistant and counselling position. That is sometimes what happens when we fill a position with an existing government employee teaching role. It creates a vacancy in another spot, so we are working to ensure that these positions are filled. The temporary teaching position will be posted in the coming week. There are two current postings: one for high school math and science and one for grades 4, 5 and 6, both of which have been posted on an ongoing basis until filled.

There are regular intakes and applicants sent for recruitment review of these postings. There is an EA posting also posted on an ongoing basis until filled, which has recently had an intake for review of applications, which is underway now. That's great news. The school has effectively been able to ensure that learning meets the needs of the students through mechanisms within the school — teacher assignments, grouping of students, and through the use of teachers on call.

Another area that was a question that we are returning to again tomorrow with a legislative return is the EA request. This was a question that came up. In the spring of 2021, schools requested a total of 410 FTEs of educational assistants for the 2021-22 school year. This number represents the schools' assessments of their educational assistant needs.

Student Support Services staff then review all school requests for EA allocations using the needs-based process established in 2015 and 2016 by the educational assistant allocation advisory committee, which includes student enrolment and student intensive needs, either shared support to small student groups or individual support one to one. The allocation for the 2021 school year, as of November 19, 2021, was 248.4 FTEs. Through the review of inclusive and special education, we will be examining how we allocate EAs and other resources to best support students. I'm really excited about that work.

Again, I have a number of other legislative returns. If those questions come up, we will address them throughout the debate today. I'm looking forward to questions around early learning and childcare.

Mr. Dixon: Thanks to the minister for that information. I look forward to seeing the legislative returns tomorrow, but as she alluded to, I would like to ask a few questions in the field of early learning and childcare.

To start, I will remind my colleagues that earlier this year, in the Spring Sitting, we debated the motion related to the *Child Care Act*.

The minister, I am sure, is aware that the Yukon Child Care Board has, over the last number of years, recommended through their annual report that the *Child Care Act* be reviewed comprehensively. So, when we debated the motion in the spring, the reason why we were told that the government and the Third Party would vote the motion down was in part because the government was reviewing the act as it stands.

Can the minister give us an update as to what activity has happened with regard to the comprehensive review of the *Child Care Act* and what actions have been taken so far?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to talk about the commitments that we have made around the review of the *Child Care Act*. We certainly recognize the importance of early learning and childcare for Yukon families and the need to continue to improve children's learning opportunities and outcomes. We continue to work, of course, and engage with Yukon First Nations and stakeholders, as we continue with the implementation of the universal early learning and childcare program, including with the Yukon Child Care Board. We have absolutely committed to begin the work to review Yukon's *Child Care Act*, which is reflected in my mandate letter.

We definitely confirmed with our stakeholders that there is a desire to move forward together in the modernization of this act. There are a lot of things to consider and such a huge focus area for us, as a government, but also us throughout the territory. There are a lot of key partners and stakeholders who will be working with us through this process. I know that early discussions have confirmed that desire to work together and move toward modernization of the act.

Mr. Dixon: I may have missed some of that, but can the minister explain — has there been any actual work done to review the act? Will they create a working group to do this? Will they task the Child Care Board to do it? What is the process by which they will do a comprehensive review of this act?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I can assure the member opposite that steps are being taken to move toward a modernization of the *Child Care Act*. It is a commitment that we have made. It is an item within my mandate letter. One of the key pieces — I am not sure if the member opposite is probably aware — is that we have recently had resignations from the Child Care Board for various reasons. We are in the process right now of filling those vacancies. We certainly hope to fill them before Christmas. That board is a very important stakeholder partner on the work that we are going to do together.

During the consultation and work around developing universal childcare, there were a number of interactions and information that came to us. It became very apparent that we needed to look at the modernization and opening up of this act. Right now, officials are in the process of compiling a document

that will inform what we heard during that process and will help shape the next steps in how we will go about doing this work. We continue to work with our partners and with stakeholders to ensure that we are moving forward together. The Yukon Child Care Board is certainly a big part of that and we hope to have the position filled before Christmas, as I've already stated.

Mr. Dixon: The minister said that steps were being taken to start the review, and then she said that a document will be compiled of "what we heard". I am wondering — the "what we heard" document they are compiling sounds like it is based on just the input they have received so far with regard to the implementation of the new program, but have they launched any actual consultation on this yet, or is the "what we heard" document just going to be anecdotal information?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We are just wrapping up the mid-year engagement, which is all of the operators, partners, those directly impacted by the act and who work in the field, and so, along with the information that we have gathered as we were developing the universal childcare, those are informing our next steps. We are committed to a review and modernization of this act. What we're working toward is working with those directly impacted to map out those next steps. My work will be to work with my colleagues in Cabinet to have next steps on how we will work toward this review and further engagement and review of this act.

We have a committee called a Cabinet Committee on Legislation, and that will be my work to bring that into that committee process and to then have it slated into the agenda, as we move through the process.

I think the big thing here is the commitment that our government has made to opening up this act and doing — these are not small tasks when you take on the review and move toward a modernization of an act that, again, will align with where we are in the Yukon right now.

We have certainly made early learning and childcare a high priority for our government. We know that it's incredibly important to the well-being of families, and we are committed to working with those directly impacted and our partners and stakeholders to map out those next steps and what the review will look like and how we'll get to those steps of modern legislation.

Mr. Dixon: So, can the minister commit that there will be some sort of open consultation about this? Can she indicate when that consultation will begin?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I certainly can commit that there will be open consultation. I have led reviews of pretty significant pieces of legislation for our territory in my last five years as a Cabinet minister in other portfolios, and I'm well aware of the process and the importance of good engagement and that consultation with folks. I'm well aware.

I am well aware that I cannot commit to an exact timeline today, but I will endeavour to bring that information back to members when it is available.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's commitment to doing consultation. I recognize the amount of work it takes, but I just wanted to note that the Child Care Board noted in their annual report in 2016-18 that the act should be reviewed. In the

2018-20 annual report, they indicated that it should be reviewed. Each time, the government said that they would. I think that it is only fair that the minister, who has indicated her support for this, should give Yukoners some sense of when that might happen. I appreciate that it's not in the legislative agenda yet, it sounds like, but I will let the minister confirm that. She said that she is working to get it on the legislative agenda.

Is the *Child Care Act* not currently on the legislative agenda? If it is on the legislative agenda, when is it slated to come forward?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I absolutely value the work of the Yukon Child Care Board. I want to acknowledge that they did provide us with significant feedback on the act. Our commitment is to work closely with them and get the membership back up to full capacity in the coming weeks, I hope.

In terms of whether the *Child Care Act* is on the legislative agenda, it's on our radar; it's in my mandate letter. So, absolutely, it will make its way into that process. I want to also just highlight where a lot of our focus has been — establishing universal childcare — these are significant moves that we have made in our territory to enhance the early learning and childcare wholly in terms of helping families with affordability, but also creating new childcare opportunities and more spots for children to go into.

One of the things that we have worked toward is shifting all of this whole area from Health and Social Services to the Department of Education. The shift that we have seen in the last year or so is significant. We brought in universal childcare on April 1, even ahead of the federal program, because we felt that it was absolutely an essential part of the work that we needed to do to help around affordability for families, but also that whole continuum of learning for our youngest Yukoners and to have them best prepared to go into the school system.

We have certainly put a lot of effort, and we have an incredible team of folks working hard over at the Department of Education to bring the new focus of early learning and childcare — universal childcare — into reality. This is a big part of the next steps to do the review on the act and to make sure that we have the best, most modern legislation to help guide us through the next short term, mid term, and long term. What is the vision going to be? I think that we are starting to get a sense of that in terms of our work with all of those who are part of the — who are most impacted and who are our partners. There is a lot of excitement. I have certainly had some great discussions with our partners at different tables and particularly with the federal minister. She has taken on a new role — Minister Gould, who is excited to work with Yukon — and really acknowledges us getting out of the gate early, even before we had an agreement with Canada. Modernization of legislation is really important to this whole process.

So, thank you for the questions. I think they are really important questions, and my commitment is to see this through and to do it in the best possible way and to include as many voices as we can and to get it right. That is my commitment to Yukoners.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's answer that she is not able to give us a time at this point. I appreciate that, and I will move on.

The department conducted a review of the supported childcare worker program back in 2020. It had been a long-standing recommendation of the Child Care Board to do so. At the time, folks were told that the review was conducted internally. So, obviously, in the 2020 annual report, the Child Care Board requested that internal review to be shared. I'm wondering if that review was shared. What is the status of the review of the supported childcare worker program, and can the minister provide us an update on that? If she is willing or able, can she share that internal review that was conducted of that program?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question on the supported childcare worker program. I will endeavour to bring back some information on this through a legislative return.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's commitment there, and I appreciate that answer.

Another question is in relation to the framework curriculum for early learning. Before the branch moved from Health and Social Services to Education, the previous Health Services branch of early learning was leading the work on a framework curriculum on early learning. Last I heard, that had been submitted to Education for consultation internally.

Then the branch moved from Health and Social Services to Education, as the minister has referenced. Now it's all in one department of Education. So, I was just wondering if we could get an update on the framework curriculum for early learning.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will certainly confirm that there is an alignment with the previous approach. I know that there has been a lot of transition as we have moved from the Department of Health and Social Services to the Department of Education. We have three early learning specialists who support the continuity and quality of early learning childcare. I think that one of the key messages here is that we are moving away from daycare to early learning. We are definitely following the BC curriculum. I think that this new unit within the Department of Education is working hard and working closely with operators to ensure that we have that continuity as children go from early learning into kindergarten and early kindergarten as well. It's that whole continuum of learning.

I am so excited about the work that they are doing in this unit, led by a great director, Betty Burns, who has been working hard to establish this unit and has a great vision for it.

Mr. Dixon: What is the timeline for rolling out the curriculum framework, and when would it apply to all early learning institutes?

Hon. Ms. McLean: This is already actually in action. It is considered a tool that is based on the BC curriculum. What was great about this is that BC's curriculum was already ready to go. It's a curriculum that is similar, in a lot of ways, to the K to 12 curriculum in terms of its ability to be molded — to Yukonize it — and to ensure that we have our Yukon culture including, of course, First Nation cultural ways of knowing, doing, and being. It is based on birth to age eight.

I certainly can bring this tool back in a legislative return. I would be happy to do that and to also confirm that this is the same curriculum that Yukon University uses for early learning childcare courses. It is very aligned and is a consistent approach, and it is definitely something that we can bring back in a legislative return. I'm happy to have more conversation about it after that.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's answers. The fact that it has already been rolled out to early learning facilities is news to me. I am aware of the BC early learning framework; I have seen that. It is easily available online and lays out its connections between the early learning system and primary care, but I hadn't seen a Yukon early learning framework before, so I do look forward to seeing that.

If it is already in use, can the minister confirm that all childcare facilities are employing the framework curriculum right now?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, this is a tool, as I have described already today. We have three early learning specialists who are working with our early learning childcare environments. What is a really key distinction is that, when daycares came over to the Department of Education, we were moving into the direction of early learning and childcare — so, moving into this new way of doing things. This tool has guided the specialists who work with those centres to move toward these early learning environments and move away from simply a daycare setting and into that continuum of learning.

We certainly can bring forward the tool that is being used — again, it is based on the BC curriculum and is flexible, shaping the way that we are working with our early learning environments into a Yukonized and unique approach. I am really excited about the work that's happening. It's always a work in progress, and the tools that we have been able to work with through BC have been very valuable. Again, there's a new unit that has been formed to bring us into this new and different way of looking at childcare, shaping them into early learning environments and better preparing our children for when they come into kindergarten or pre-kindergarten and to be more successful in our school system overall.

Mr. Dixon: I thank the minister for the commitment to provide that to us. I look forward to seeing the tool. Like I said, I'm very familiar with BC's. I have reviewed it thoroughly. I watched as they reviewed their 2008 early learning framework and updated it more recently. The cumulation of that work is obviously available to anyone online to review. I hadn't seen Yukon's yet, so I do look forward to seeing that.

I will move on. I have a few questions about the new universal early learning childcare funding program. The first one relates to how it works with childcare facilities that are owned and run by First Nations. I know that there are two streams to the system: One is a parent-facing one to reduce the costs for parents, and the other is an operational stream that supports the operators. In the case of the parent-facing stream, it is an amount of \$700 that a parent had paid and is reduced by that much. I understand how that works with private childcare facilities that are regulated by the department, but I'm not clear how those work with First Nation-owned and First Nation-run

childcare facilities. For instance, each First Nation is a little bit different in how they run their childcare.

In some cases, parents pay a fee, and in some cases, parents pay a subsidized fee, and in some cases, I believe there are some where parents pay almost nothing previous to the universal childcare system.

I am wondering how the \$700 flows in the case of parents whose kids go to a First Nation-owned and -run childcare facility.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thanks for the question. This is a huge commitment that our government made. We brought it into effect on April 1. We are certainly continuing to work with Yukon First Nations and other partners to enhance early learning and childcare programming in Yukon, as we move toward a vision in which all children have access to affordable, high-quality early learning and childcare opportunities.

The big difference, in terms of how we work with Yukon First Nations, is that our agreement is government-to-government. All other aspects of our universal early learning and childcare are consistent with others and have the same enhancements. In terms of the new universal early learning and childcare model — the new funding model came into effect on April 1, 2021, and government budgeted at that time \$25,202,000 for 2021-22 to support the new program.

The Government of Yukon is now — as a result of our agreement that we signed over the summer for a further \$54.3 million in the next five years to further enhance the universal early learning and childcare funding model, all licensed operators had the choice to opt into the new program within two years by signing a transfer payment agreement. Again, the big difference here in terms of — is that we have a government-to-government agreement. The reduction of parent fees is the same whether you are First Nation — again, this was universal for all children in Yukon.

So, government provides licensed operators who have opted into the new program with \$700 per month for each child in full-time childcare, which must be fully and immediately applied to reduce the monthly payment made by parents. This is also pro-rated for children in part-time childcare. The new program also includes fee-increase limits to ensure that fees charged to parents remain both sustainable and affordable and in line with the rates charged by other providers delivering the same type of childcare.

In terms of reduction in operational and administration expenses for operators, the government provides additional funding to operators to reduce their operational and administrative expenses and to support program needs. Government provides funding to operators to support them in developing high-quality early learning environments, as we have talked about already today, and funding to increase wages for early learning educators.

Government provides funding to operators to be applied directly to increase the wage paid by operators for early childcare educators. Wages for most early learning childcare educators employed by operators who opt into the new program increase effectively on April 1, 2021. Funding includes an additional payment of 12 percent of wage costs to operators for

mandatory employment-related costs, like CPP, EI, and WCB contributions.

Wages for all early childcare educators employed by operators who opt into the universal childcare received an additional increase effective August 1, 2021, with a \$1.35 increase to the minimum wage.

Again, just to be clear, we are working with all of our operators in a similar way, so I hope that has answered the questions of the member opposite in terms of the application. There are other annexes and more opportunities that we have recently made available to folks in the Yukon around cultural opportunities, and we can get into more of those, but I want to give the member a chance to ask another question.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's willingness to let me clarify. So, I just want to confirm that, when a private operator wants to tap into the new program, they enter into an agreement with the government, they sign an agreement, and the operator is provided — depending on the age of the kids and stuff like that — all things being equal — \$700 per kid per month. Then there is a subsequent reduction in the rates that parents pay. If I paid \$850 a month previously, under the new program, I pay \$150 a month.

My question was if that worked the same for parents of kids who attend a First Nation-owned childcare facility, and the reason I ask that is because, as the minister suggested, the relationship between the government and the First Nation-owned childcare facility is somewhat different. She mentioned that it happens at the government-to-government level, and so rather than it being a TPA with a private business, the relationship is at the government-to-government level. So, presumably then, the Government of Yukon provides an amount of money to the First Nation on a government-to-government level. I am just wondering how that flows down to the individual parents who are supposed to receive the benefit in the amount that they pay on a monthly basis.

Perhaps, before she moves progress, the minister can just quickly address that, and if not, we can follow up on another day or perhaps by letter.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am not sure that I am following the line of questioning from the member opposite, but I just want to be clear that the Yukon government's program is open to all licensed programs, including Yukon First Nations', and we are the licensing body. We work with all of our licensed facilities, and so it is applied the same. I'm not sure if there is something that the member is suggesting there in terms of whether the First Nations are applying the money to something else. I'm not exactly sure there. I think it would be great if the member opposite would put the question in writing, and we will bring it back in that form because I want to be clear about this in terms of ensuring that we are getting the right answers here.

All of our programs are applied equally. We have eight of these agreements with Yukon First Nations across the territory. That's another part of that. I would like to be clear about that, so we will follow up. Perhaps the member can put that in writing and we will write back.

Madam Chair, seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mountainview that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

May the House have a report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the House do now adjourn.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to

Speaker: This House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled December 1, 2021:

35-1-32

Yukon state of the environment interim report 2021 — A report on environmental indicators (Clarke, N.)

35-1-33

Crime Prevention & Victim Services Trust Fund Annual report 2020-21 (McPhee)

The following legislative return was tabled December 1, 2021:

35-1-18

Response to matter outstanding from discussion related to the appearance of witnesses from the Yukon Workers'

Compensation Health and Safety Board before Committee of the Whole on November 25, 2021 (Mostyn)

The following documents were filed December 1, 2021:

35-1-36

Bill No. 8, *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*, letter re (dated December 1, 2021) from Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, to Stephanie Smith, BCGEU (Mostyn)

35-1-37

Bill No. 3, *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*, letter re (dated December 1, 2021) from Kate White, Leader of the Third Party, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (White)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 42

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, December 2, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier Government House Leader* Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
Hon. Nils Clarke	Riverdale North	Minister of Highways and Public Works; Environment
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Government House Leader* Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Minister of Economic Development; Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Jeanie McLean	Mountainview	Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

Currie Dixon	Leader of the Official Opposition Copperbelt North	Scott Kent	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Yvonne Clarke	Porter Creek Centre	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Emily Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Annie Blake	Vuntut Gwitchin

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

*Government House Leader: Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee to November 4, 2021; Hon. John Streicker from November 5, 2021

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, December 2, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.**

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.
We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will proceed at this time with the Order Paper.

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Hassard: I would like to ask all members to join me in recognizing a young fellow in the Legislature today — Jim Bobby Laking is with us. We were hoping that his brother Hank Henry would have been here as well, but he had to go to school. He couldn't get out of the school. James brought a couple of folks with him, his mother, Colleen, and his dad, Ted. Ted is our soon-to-be former chief of staff and newly elected politician as city councillor.

Someone told me recently that, of all the people I have hired in my life, Ted might rank right up there in the top nine or 10 as best employee, so thank you for being here.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of legislative counsel office staff

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It is a great honour to rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the staff of the legislative counsel office at the Department of Justice.

The legislative counsel office has a unique and specialized role. They draft the laws that govern our territory — laws that provide for the rights and responsibilities of individuals and organizations. The committed and dedicated people at the legislative counsel office are like no other — a fact that has only been emphasized by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since the pandemic began, the legislative counsel office has worked diligently to draft the regulations, orders, and directions that have given legal authority for the implementation of the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health. In addition, this team has continued to advance the development of legislation to meet the needs of, and to fulfill our commitment to, all Yukoners.

To underscore this point, I note that, since March of 2020, the legislative counsel office has completed 31 bills, 1,188 regulations, and 177 ministerial orders. This is on top of the most ambitious legislative agenda that this government has ever seen since our election in 2016.

In order to achieve this impressive amount of work, these individuals have quite literally worked day and night to ensure that all Yukoners have a legal framework that supports a safe

and modern society. We would not be in the strong position that we are in today without their expertise and commitment. It speaks volumes about the characters and the character of the people in that office.

Of course, we must also recognize the literally hundreds of people who work across government who provide the policy work and instructions to our legislative counsel office.

Today, I pay tribute to the legislative counsel office team of Rebecca Veinott, Andrea Bailey, Benoit Brouillard, Christine Badcock, Damien Tremblay, Katherine Hartshorne, Michel Gelin, Renée Craig, Sheri Hogeboom, and Suzanne Pellerin, none of whom could be here today because of the workload that I have just described.

The leadership and hard work exemplified by your team is commendable, and it is through your day-to-day work that we are reminded of the significance and the purpose of our laws. This has real impact on all Yukoners.

I also wish to acknowledge the extensive legal work undertaken by others in the Legal Services division who provide legal advice under difficult and dynamic situations — even temporarily working as drafters during the initial state of emergency in order to support the team that I have just named. Your efforts to improve the laws of the Yukon and to work quickly and diligently in challenging circumstances during a pandemic have not gone unnoticed. It may seem like you are behind the scenes, but never doubt that everything you do has a powerful impact on the entire territory, and we are grateful.

I would ask all Members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in honouring the service and dedication of the people who make up the legislative counsel office, legal services experts, and our Yukon public service who work every day to support this Legislative Assembly and all Yukoners.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to all of the government employees involved in developing and drafting legislation. We appreciate the amount of work and detail that goes into the drafting process for legislation and regulations.

I would like to further extend our recognition and thank all of the public servants who worked on behalf of Yukoners throughout this year. As we finish up this Fall Sitting and head into the holiday season, we would like to acknowledge all staff for the work that you do and for the services that you provide to Yukoners. To all full-time, part-time, casual, and auxiliary-on-call staff, contractors, and others — regardless of your current employment status — thank you for your work on behalf of Yukoners this year. We will be thinking of all of you during the Christmas season and wishing you and your families well.

The pandemic has placed a lot of stress and strain on many people, and debates over issues such as vaccination mandates have been divisive, adding additional stress in relationships, friendships, and communities. As another Fall Sitting draws to a close and the Christmas season begins, we urge everyone to be compassionate and caring to your neighbours and all

Yukoners. We will not always agree with each other, but we do not have to agree with each other to care about each other.

We wish all Yukoners well this holiday season and in the year to come. Merry Christmas to you and your family.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus to thank the legislative counsel office and Yukon's legislative drafters. This office is full of wordsmiths. They are the grammar police, and they are smart. They understand the technical requirements as to the form of legislation and perform the task in a non-partisan manner.

Legislative drafting has a long history that dates back to at least the 15th century in England, and since that time, those tasked with the work of writing laws have morphed and changed.

Today, we find ourselves in the present day where we in the Yukon have a small, dedicated team of word wizards and their support staff at the Department of Justice. Every piece of legislation, every regulation, and every change in wording or action goes through the hands of a legislative drafter. The drafter's role is to ensure that government policy is expressed effectively in legislation. Legislation must be clear and it must be accurate, and this is no easy task. A drafter must not only understand what the legislation is intended to do, but also know how language works to convey that meaning. They must do it in a way that we average humans can understand.

The drafter plays a critical role in determining the effect that legislation has. It's this team that keeps Yukon moving forward and keeps us up to date. We thank the legislative counsel office for their dedication, their words, and their integrity.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I have for tabling the health care insurance program's annual report, April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021, pursuant to section 6 of the *Health Care Insurance Plan Act* and section 7 of the *Hospital Insurance Services Act*.

I also have for tabling two legislative returns to written questions submitted on May 25, 2021 by the Member for Lake Laberge and the Member for Porter Creek Centre.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have for tabling, pursuant to section 101 of the *Public Service Labour Relations Act*, the Yukon Public Service Labour Relations Board annual report.

I also have for tabling, pursuant to section 103 of the *Education Labour Relations Act*, the Yukon Teachers Labour Relations Board annual report.

I have also for tabling four legislative returns: one for the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources from debate in Committee of the Whole and three for the Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation, also from debate in Committee of the Whole.

Finally, I have for tabling today, from the Public Service Commission, the statistics about employee attestations and employees on leave without pay for departments.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling a letter from the Wilderness Tourism Association of Yukon to the Leader of the Official Opposition expressing concerns over proposed amendments to expand cancer presumption to wildland firefighters.

I also have for tabling a letter from Yukon First Nations Wildfire expressing their support for the current WCB legislation before the House and supporting the government's commitment to continue to investigate occupational hazards relating to wildland firefighting.

I also have for tabling an e-mail from the International Association of Fire Fighters opposing last-minute changes to the WCB legislation.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I have for tabling a legislative return in response to a question posed by the Member for Porter Creek North on November 17, 2021.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I have for tabling the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues annual report for 2020-21, pursuant to section 15(3) of the *Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act*.

I also have for tabling seven legislative returns arising from earlier debate in Committee of the Whole on Vote 3, Bill No. 202, on: the Old Crow staffing situation; Yukon First Nation board of trustees and their eligibility; school bus arrival standards; EA requests; the staff reporting tool; staffing attestation numbers for the Department of Education; and adult learning supports and programs.

Ms. White: I have for tabling today a letter from Yukon First Nations Wildfire encouraging support of presumptive cancer coverage for wildland firefighters.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees? Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 8 — response

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I rise to speak to the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition's Petition No. 8, tabled in the House by the Member for Whitehorse Centre, calling for a moratorium on evictions without cause.

I realize that our rental housing market is challenging right now. Our economy is growing, and with new people coming into the territory, finding housing is challenging. It is heartrending to hear that some people are losing their homes through no fault of their own.

Before I continue, I would like to explain the role of the residential tenancies office and acknowledge the good work that the branch does. It provides information about the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* and regulations and

provides legally binding dispute resolution between landlords and tenants. A key function of the office is education to help prevent disputes. In 2020-21, the residential tenancies office responded to hundreds of inquiries, fairly evenly split between both landlords and tenants. Common questions revolve around security deposits, tenancy agreements, repairs, and rent payment rules.

Mr. Speaker, following the election, we entered into the 2021 confidence and supply agreement with the New Democratic Party. Under the terms of this agreement, the Yukon government agreed to cap residential rent increases to the annual inflation rate, effective May 15, 2021 and continuing through the term of the agreement until January 31, 2023.

In the face of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the tight housing market, we agreed to an interim residential rent cap to provide immediate support to renters. The rent cap allows renters to plan for the future, knowing that their rent will not be increasing each year. Stable, affordable housing is foundational to the health and well-being of all Yukoners. Rental security is also a complex issue that requires a deft, thoughtful, and well-considered approach.

We recognize that this is just one of many ways to support housing security in the Yukon. We are committed to long-term strategies, such as the Canada-Yukon Housing benefit that is getting financial support directly to renters in need. We also have committed to getting more housing onto the market, and we are working on that every week.

When we announced the rent cap, we committed to working with both landlords and tenants to ensure that our solutions to the issue of affordable rent were fair to all Yukoners. In the coming months, we will continue to work with landlords and tenants to assess the impact of the rent cap and to determine the best mix of initiatives to address this complex issue going forward. Doing this might take some time. As we consider any other changes to the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*, we will take the time needed to engage with stakeholders to ensure that all perspectives are heard.

Mr. Speaker, landlords currently have the ability to evict without cause. This means that a landlord can end the tenancy without providing a reason. I know that the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition's petition requests that the government issue an order-in-council to temporarily prevent evictions without cause until the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* is reviewed. In fact, we cannot temporarily end without-cause evictions. To make this change requires an amendment to the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*. Because the right to end tenancies without cause is in the act, we cannot repeal it by regulation — we cannot repeal it by regulation.

Changing legislation is a lengthy process. It is not something that is done overnight. When both parties signed the CAS agreement in good faith, we acknowledged that the rent index is an interim measure to provide immediate support to renters. We anticipated and flagged challenges with this policy, and we now know the rent cap had significant negative impacts on the rental market — and we are hearing about it every day. Not only has it caused some evictions — which, as I said

earlier, are heart-rending — but it has also undermined the financial applications for some apartment block sales.

Over the two-year period while the CASA is in effect, we will work with all stakeholders to look at options and evaluate how best to proceed. Ultimately, we want a rental regulatory environment that meets the needs of landlords, tenants, and all Yukoners.

We recognize that Yukon's economic prosperity relies on making available housing that meets people's needs. Legislative change will be considered; however, it will require careful work to ensure that it meets the needs of tenants and landlords, that it is balanced, that it meets the needs of everyone.

Our goal is to ensure tenants can access affordable housing and that landlords will continue to invest in Yukon's robust rental market.

Speaker: Are there any petitions to be presented?
Are there any bills to be introduced?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to make COVID-19 booster shots available to everyone 18-plus who wants one as quickly as possible and announce a timeline for making these available in all communities.

Ms. McLeod: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to move quickly to make the Janssen COVID-19 vaccine, commonly referred to as "Johnson & Johnson", available in rural communities and announce dates for these clinics promptly.

Ms. White: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to immediately review the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to initiate a comprehensive review of the need for a Yukon clinic-based dialysis program for Yukoners requiring hemodialysis.

Ms. Blake: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to publicly release the implementation plan for a managed alcohol program, as referenced by the Minister of Health and Social Services on December 1, 2021.

I also give notice of the following motion for the production of papers:

THAT this House do order the return of the Department of Health and Social Services implementation plan for a managed alcohol program.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Yukon Days

Hon. Mr. Silver: It is my pleasure today to rise in recognition of Yukon Days, an important series of trilateral meetings that are happening on December 3, 6, and 7 of this year. During Yukon Days, the Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nations have an opportunity to bring our shared priorities to federal ministers. Over the coming days, we will be meeting virtually with federal ministers on a number of topics, including our continued response to COVID-19, climate change, resilient infrastructure, and clean energy.

The lack of housing and resilient infrastructure across the north is a major concern, and a growing demand on our power grid must be met through new renewable energy projects. We look forward to digging deeper into the details of several priority projects and discussing the territory's investment needs with the new federal ministers. Yukoners are seeing the tragic impacts of the opioid crisis and the effects on our communities. We know that both of these issues have been compounded through the pandemic as well.

Along with my fellow premiers at the Council of the Federation, I have been leading a discussion on the need for more mental health resources. I look forward to continuing these important conversations, together with our First Nation partners. The federal government has created a new Cabinet position to address these issues which are taking their toll on Canadians across the country.

We will also focus on the positive future of mineral development in the territory and how industry and government can include more First Nation consultations when ensuring environmentally responsible and sustainable development. To accomplish our goals, we need to streamline review processes to ensure that projects can stick to reliable and consistent timelines. Mining has maintained momentum throughout the pandemic and is contributing significantly to Yukon's strong economic growth, which is leading the country. Other sectors, such as tourism, have been devastated by the pandemic, and we want to continue working together to provide supports to this vital industry.

In addition to highlighting our shared priorities, Yukon Days is also an opportunity to showcase the territory as a leader in reconciliation. We have built strong government-to-government relationships with Yukon First Nations, and Yukon Days is a reflection of that.

We support Yukon First Nations and all indigenous communities across Canada in an effort to address our dark history, and we will continue working toward a brighter future for all Yukoners and for all Canadians.

I want to thank Yukon First Nation chiefs who will be participating in this year's Yukon Days meetings. By working together, Mr. Speaker, we can continue to advance priorities to improve the lives of all Yukoners.

Mr. Dixon: Yukoners know our relationship with the federal government in Ottawa is of the utmost importance, no

matter which political party is in power. That is why one of the key themes of the year for voicing the Yukon's issues and concerns to the powers that be in Ottawa is Yukon Days.

No matter which political party is in power here in the territory, it's a prime opportunity for not only territorial government officials to speak to their federal counterparts, but for Yukon First Nation governments to stand side by side with territorial ministers and officials in a united front, while addressing joint priorities, including our shared commitment to reconciliation.

We are pleased to hear that those chiefs who are able to participate virtually will have the opportunity to do so. We know that each Yukon community has their own issues, so for individual chiefs, or other representatives from Yukon First Nations, to be able to speak directly to ministers in Ottawa is the best way to address those concerns.

I'm pleased to hear the Premier say that he will raise many of the concerns that we have brought forward during the Sitting — issues such as mental health, housing, infrastructure, and tourism. I'm especially happy to hear sustainable mineral development will be a topic of discussion.

To quote from the Premier's statement: "To accomplish our goals, we need to streamline review processes to ensure that projects can stick to reliable and consistent timelines."

Mr. Speaker, we couldn't agree more. It's reassuring to hear that the Premier has done a 180 on his answers from Monday, which dismissed assessment delays on the Coffee project and the BMC Minerals project proposal as simply business as usual. He has now singled out streamlining review processes as a key discussion point with federal ministers, so we're happy that the Premier is now taking those concerns from industry seriously.

As the Premier said in his statement, mining has maintained momentum during the pandemic and is contributing to strong economic growth. All Yukoners are thankful for the work of the Yukon mining industry to keep our economy going, since many other sectors have suffered under the pandemic restrictions.

Thank you, as well, to the Intergovernmental Affairs officials for organizing those virtual meetings, and we hope for constructive dialogue and tangible solutions to many of the issues that Yukoners face.

Ms. White: The Yukon NDP are pleased to know that the Yukon government and Yukon First Nations will again be sharing their priorities with federal ministers.

There is much happening in the Yukon and affecting Yukoners that have been highlighted as topics of discussion for the upcoming meetings that were listed by the Premier. We are pleased to hear that this again will be happening remotely. The Yukon NDP strongly believes that all decisions and actions taken by governments need to include any effect on our climate, so meeting remotely just makes sense.

The pandemic continues to show us that work we once thought had to happen in person can successfully be completed remotely, whether it's public servants working from home here

in Whitehorse or in communities where they live or as officials meeting their counterparts in Ottawa.

The Yukon NDP believes in the importance of decentralizing government positions, and having access to government jobs in rural Yukon is good for rural Yukon. We look forward to future hiring for positions within Yukon government that allows folks from communities to be hired and work remotely in those communities.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you to my colleagues across the way for their support for these meetings. When we first came into office, the chiefs brought their concerns that, in past Yukon Days, they were more of a cultural component, so the Yukon Liberal government brought them, as governments, into those trilateral conversations, which is exactly where they should be.

Our voices are extremely strong when they are together; our words are louder, and our influence is greater when we speak together, so this is extremely important. Yukon Days represents an opportunity to highlight the rich contributions that our territory brings to the country and an opportunity to bring the priorities of Yukon directly to the federal government.

The timing of Yukon Days this year couldn't be better, actually, as the federal government begins their new mandate, the ministers are all in their seats now, and they are developing the 2022 budget. Climate action continues to be a key driver of federal public policy. New, resilient infrastructure will be fundamental to our territory's transition to a green, post-pandemic economy, and I was very pleased to hear it highlighted in the Speech from the Throne delivered by Canada's first-ever indigenous Governor General.

Yukon Days meetings build on the work that we've done with First Nations through the Yukon Forum. We revitalized the Yukon Forum when we took office in 2016 because we know that Yukon's future prosperity will be built through strong partnerships with First Nation governments.

Nearly 50 years ago, Chief Elijah Smith, along with a delegation of Yukon First Nation chiefs, went to Ottawa to meet with then-Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau to deliver *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*. That journey, and the conversations that they had with the government of the day, set the Yukon on a path of championing indigenous rights for Yukon First Nations and indigenous people across Canada.

Chief Elijah Smith's vision and availability to unify resulted in an agreement that remains a model for indigenous self-governance in Canada still today.

We believe that it is our duty as leaders to uphold the spirit and the intent of the final and self-government agreements. We must move forward together on a path of reconciliation on the basis of respect and collaboration.

Again, I look forward to these important meetings in the coming days. Together with our First Nation partners, we are building a brighter future for the territory.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Political party fundraising

Mr. Dixon: More than half of the Liberal Cabinet is heading to Vancouver in two weeks to party it up at a crowded corporate box at the Canucks game. This event is happening in the midst of strict public health restrictions on gathering sizes and limits on the capacities of bars and restaurants here in Yukon. It is not lost on Yukoners that the event the Liberals are hosting in Vancouver would not be allowed here in Yukon under the regulations put in place by the Liberals themselves.

Meanwhile, the federal government has advised Canadians to reconsider large holiday gatherings due to the Omicron variant, and the message from Dr. Bonnie Henry, the chief medical officer of BC, to the province regarding Christmas parties is to keep your indoor groups small.

So, can the Premier tell us why there is one standard for the Liberals and another for everyone else?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I believe that this is the same question that I answered yesterday. We will be following all of the recommendations and guidelines in the jurisdiction in which we are travelling. We will be making sure that this happens. We have committed to openness and transparency, as well, in following the rules established around fundraising.

I don't recall the Yukon Party having an issue with party fundraising when they were raising the most money, involving the mining industry. The Yukon Party had 14 years to change rules as well. Now they are pivoting to making this an issue about COVID, and I will make sure that Yukoners can rest assured that we are following all of the guidelines as we travel respectfully to another jurisdiction.

Mr. Dixon: Over the past several weeks, we have seen multiple major events cancelled. The Geoscience Forum, which is normally a boon to the Whitehorse hospitality sector, was cancelled. Major Christmas events and parties have been cancelled, all because of the health restrictions imposed by the Liberals. Meanwhile, the Liberals have decided that the biggest event they have hosted in years is going to be held not in a local restaurant or an event space, but down south in Vancouver.

Last week, the Premier urged Yukoners to pay special attention to supporting local businesses this holiday season, yet he won't even support local businesses by hosting his event locally. The Liberals are saying that it is: "Rules for thee, but not for me" as they restrict gatherings in Yukon but head south to crowded parties.

What message does the Premier think that this Liberal event sends to Yukoners and local businesses that have sacrificed under the restrictions that he has imposed here in Yukon over the past month?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think that more of the narrative that we could add to this as well is that the Yukon Party used to use taxpayers' monies to help them do their fundraising.

Mr. Speaker, this is sour grapes from the members opposite, wrapped up in a little bit of concern.

As far as supporting local businesses, the Minister of Economic Development, along with our full team, have provided the most comprehensive packages in Canada throughout the pandemic for the local businesses. We have led

the nation in packages for businesses. How did we get there? By meeting with the businesses, by talking with the businesses, by working on their unique and specific needs, not only here in Whitehorse, but throughout the whole of Yukon. We are very proud of the relationships that we have built with local businesses.

When I am in the press conferences, we talk all the time about wanting to see fewer Amazon boxes in front of people's doors and more support for local businesses when it comes to the holiday season.

We will continue to fundraise, as the other parties will do, and we will do it respectfully and we will do it openly and with full transparency.

Mr. Dixon: What we hear from the Premier is to: "Do as I say, not as I do" with regard to support for local businesses.

The Premier has laid off hundreds of Yukoners just weeks before Christmas. He has forced strict new rules on bars, restaurants, and public gatherings. The cancellation of some of the biggest events of the year have hurt the local economy.

Now, in the shadow of all of the sacrifices that Yukoners have made, the Liberals are jetting off to Vancouver to host a crowded party. This shoulder-to-shoulder event would not be allowed in Yukon under the rules that the Liberals themselves have brought in, and it is happening just as the Omicron variant has arrived in Vancouver.

BC and Dr. Bonnie Henry have given new health advice for holiday parties indicating that indoor gatherings should be kept small, while stating that those partying should be aware of how their actions can bring COVID to their communities.

What message does the Premier think that this sends to Yukon citizens and businesses?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Our chief medical officer of health has said in the past that, as we move through the pandemic, we must make sure that, as we open and close and as we follow the restrictions and guidelines, we do it respectfully and that we are aware of the guidelines in the jurisdictions that we are leaving and the jurisdictions that we are going into. We have done that. If things change in BC, and if the hockey game is not open to vaccinated individuals — if travelling down to Vancouver — if the rules of the Canadian government changes about travelling —

We are all vaccinated. We are moving within all the rules and regulations there. I know that the opposition doesn't want to hear this. They don't want to hear that we are meeting with not only mining folks but also tourism folks —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Order, please. The member has the floor.

Hon. Mr. Silver: A vast array of local businesses will be there, and they also will be travelling very respectfully, but I will let them know that the Yukon Party does not think that they should be travelling either.

Question re: COVID-19 vaccination requirement rollout

Ms. Van Bibber: Yesterday, we learned that hundreds of employees of the Yukon government have been placed on leave without pay. We still don't know how many have

resigned or quit prior to yesterday, and we still don't know how many people from the private sector or the NGO sector have lost their jobs as well. All of this is happening just weeks before Christmas. Yesterday, the minister confirmed that those workers are ineligible for EI. We also understand that employees are not allowed to access their banked vacation time to pay bills.

Can the government tell us what financial supports are available to the hundreds of Yukoners who are no longer getting paycheques this Christmas season?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We did follow the advice of the chief medical officer of health who stated that it was important that we address the wave that was coming to us with the Delta variant. I am very thankful for everyone's efforts around this. I heard through the Minister of Health and Social Services just recently — and the Premier announced it yesterday — that the circuit breaker has been working. I would like to say thank you to all public servants.

I just tabled numbers here in the Legislature. We have had a few more people attesting since yesterday, so now it is less than two percent of our full-time employees who have not attested and are on leave without pay. It is correct that, under the federal rules around employment insurance, they are not eligible. I will work to get a specific answer for the member opposite about what other benefits are available for our employees, but they are not fired. They are still our employees. I thank them for their service.

I would also like to say — yesterday I was asked —

Speaker: Ten seconds.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope to be able to get up again and talk about mental wellness supports and other supports.

Ms. Van Bibber: The Christmas and holiday period can be one of celebration and cheer, but it does come with anxiety and stress for some families. We do worry how the loss of employment income for hundreds of Yukoners will affect this stress and anxiety.

Can government ensure that steps are in place so that these laid-off employees who cannot access EI or their benefits have full assistance to, and easier contacts for, mental health supports over the holiday season?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The number that I just tabled today is 117 employees. The member across is saying hundreds, but it's 117, and they are all people. This is tough for them, for sure.

We do have mental health supports for all of our employees. We know that there has been general anxiety and stress due to work disruptions and social routines caused by COVID-19 and the vaccine requirements and that they have increased. Our understanding is that all people are susceptible to changes to their mental well-being, and so we have undertaken a number of steps recommended by the Mental Health Commission of Canada to address psychological health and safety in our workplaces.

I know that we have had all of our managers and supervisors take introductory mental health training so that they can identify where that stress is. It will help to raise the mental health literacy for our managers, and it will help to challenge

the stigmas around mental health issues and working on the continuum of mental well-being. It's about supporting our staff.

I have instructed the Public Service Commission to work through the departments and to work through each supervisor and manager with their teams to try to make sure that those supports are in place for our staff.

Ms. Van Bibber: It is common to see increased pressure on the food bank over the holiday season, but in light of the hundreds of Yukoners who have recently lost their employment income, we anticipate that this year will be particularly busy for our local food banks. Will the Yukon government consider increasing its support for local food banks in light of the anticipated increase in demand?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I know that there has been increased activity with the food bank. I know that we have been in conversation with the food bank and the Anti-Poverty Coalition. I will check with the Minister of Health and Social Services about what supports we have going on right now. I would like to thank all of the not-for-profits across the territory that work to support all Yukoners at this time. We will do our best to help support them.

I want to say that, here in the Legislature, I have heard the members opposite talk about it being 20 percent or 10 percent of our employees. I have just tabled the numbers. It is under two percent. Of course, those are all very real numbers for people. I want to thank all of the public service sector for coming forward to do their attestations.

I respect the choices of all of our public service employees, including those who are now on leave without pay. We will do our best to support them, and we will do our best to support the community over Christmas time and ongoing, as we have throughout this pandemic, to work to keep the Yukon safe and whole.

Question re: Health care services

Ms. Blake: It has been three months since the only walk-in clinic in the territory closed its services. As we all know, thousands of Yukoners are left to sit on a wait-list for access to primary care. To quote one Yukoner on the wait-list: "I am going to die sooner, because right now..." — the system tells us — "... 'don't come to see us until you're really, really sick'... That quite literally means that this health care system is shortening my life."

Has the minister directed her department to open a public walk-in clinic?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question and the opportunity that we have had throughout this session to speak about access to medical care here in the territory and the opportunity that we have had to speak about the access to a walk-in clinic.

The members opposite will know about *Putting People First* and the concept of how we must modernize and change our health care services here in the territory. *Putting People First* is an independent opportunity for Yukoners throughout the health system — including professionals, Yukoners, and others — to have their input into how we need to do better and modernize our system here in the territory.

We recognize that the affected walk-in clinic process here in Whitehorse is of concern. We have had the opportunity to debate that here as well. We have started the implementation of *Putting People First*. We have expanded the access to virtual care alternatives, we have added more nurse practitioners to our staff across the territory, and we are exploring options for primary care. I hope to be able to continue my answer.

Ms. Blake: Yukoners are confused. The first time we asked, the minister ruled out a public walk-in clinic altogether. The next time, the minister denied the number of Yukoners on the wait-list. Then, just weeks ago, the minister told the media that a public walk-in clinic is — and I quote — certainly something we are exploring. Each time, the minister's story, numbers, and excuses change, but for the many Yukoners without primary care, nothing has changed at all.

Can the minister tell Yukoners when they can expect a public walk-in clinic?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I don't think that it will surprise anyone that I don't agree with the preamble to that particular question. What is important here is that Yukoners have access to health care in its various forms across the territory and that we put them at the centre of what is a soon-to-be modernized Yukon health care system.

We have a road map; it is *Putting People First*. We have a great relationship with the Yukon Medical Association, and we are working closely with them with respect to how we can resolve the issues of current concern to Yukoners regarding their primary care, but we must remember that there are lots of ways in which Yukoners can have access to medical care here in territory.

I have recently met the new physician recruiter with respect to the partnership with the Yukon Medical Association. I will meet again with her tomorrow, and I look forward to doing that. Health care recruitment and retention strategies represent one part of our overall work to support Yukoners to lead healthy and happy lives.

Mr. Speaker, our government has expanded the scope of practice for pharmacists. We have improved access to preventative treatments, and we have increased the number of specialists here in the territory.

I look forward to continuing my answer.

Ms. Blake: My question is simple: When the minister told Yukoners that the public walk-in clinic was something that she was certainly exploring, she was asked for details. The minister couldn't provide them. She said — and I quote: Not sometime soon, and there is no time frame.

I am sure that the over 2,000 Yukoners without primary care are eager to know what this actually means for them. Will the minister open a public walk-in clinic — yes or no?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I do appreciate the question and I appreciate that it is one part of the services that can be provided for Yukoners. I also appreciate the attempt to make policy regarding medical services here in the territory on the floor of the Legislative Assembly.

It's a very important question to Yukoners. We have provided \$4.52 million to the Yukon Medical Association in the 2021-22 main estimates to administer 14 physician

recruitment and retention initiatives, including the medical student bursary program, the preceptor support program, a locum support fund, and others. We have also, by comparison, almost doubled that funding from the 2014-15 year in that particular budget.

A walk-in clinic is an important potential option for the territory. We are absolutely exploring that. We're exploring it with local physicians who would need to be supportive of that process and perhaps initiate that process. I'm looking forward to those conversations with individual physicians and with the Yukon Medical Association and ultimately with the Canadian Medical Association, which has this physician recruitment and retention across the country as one of their top issues.

Question re: Rural solid-waste transfer stations

Mr. Istchenko: When my constituents on the north Alaska Highway invited the Minister of Community Services to a meeting about the closure of the solid-waste transfer station at Silver City, they were disappointed with the minister's abrasive approach and unwillingness to consider their input. In fact, some even started a petition urging the minister to launch real consultations before the transfer station that many of them rely on is closed.

Yesterday, we saw the minister admit that he failed to consult with municipalities on changes to the *Municipal Act* as he was forced to shelve the bill until the spring.

So, this retrieve gave my constituents hope that he will also admit that he failed to consult on the plans to close the rural transfer station. Will the minister now also agree to delay the closure of the solid-waste transfer station until proper consultation has occurred with residents and their views can actually be considered?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I welcome the opportunity to talk about how we're modernizing our waste management systems across the territory so that they match the systems that are used across the country. This hasn't been done before, and it happened because municipalities came to my colleague and asked that he actually improve the way that waste management is being done in the territory because they could not deal with the costs any longer. They wanted it dealt with properly.

What we have is a three-phase plan to deal with waste management. The first phase is already complete. The goal is to have waste management facilities across the territory that are supervised and gated so that we do not have people throwing hazardous waste, paints, solvents, and other deleterious materials into a landfill without any supervision.

Now we're doing that in all communities. In four locations, four transfer stations are going to close because currently we can't supervise them. We do not want to have a hole in this bucket where people can throw contaminated waste or other garbage without being seen. So, we are going to close four transfer stations in the territory as part of the plan that we agreed to with the Association of Yukon Communities. That plan is proceeding through the Association of Yukon Communities' process, and we welcome more questions on this topic this afternoon.

Mr. Istchenko: The question that I actually asked was if the minister would agree to do proper consultation with the residents.

So, the residents on the north Alaska Highway aren't the only ones dissatisfied with the minister's lack of consultation. The government has also made the decision to close the transfer station at Johnsons Crossing. The minister's "go it alone" approach on this has also upset those residents.

Will the minister agree to host a public meeting with affected residents to seek their input before the transfer station at Johnsons Crossing — which several residents and businesses rely on — is closed permanently?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Currently, managing garbage and recycling costs Yukoners more than \$12 million a year. We are working to manage these escalating costs and reduce environmental risk. We want to do well by our territory and by our territorial environment. We want to make sure that we are doing things better, cleaner, and more efficiently. That's what we are doing. We are working with the Association of Yukon Communities to do this.

The Yukon solid-waste management system of the previous government was not sustainable and it was necessary to take action. In fact, as I said, municipalities asked us to take action because they were tired of the intransigence of the Yukon government. My good colleague, the current Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, stepped up and started that work. He has done great work on this.

Promising to keep these transfer stations open, as the Yukon Party has done, shows a lack of leadership in an era where waste per person is going up. We are, as a society, creating more garbage. What we have to do is put a cost to that garbage and start to work as a society to reduce the amount of garbage we produce. This is happening in all other jurisdictions in the country, and it is now coming to the territory.

The Yukon Party clearly does not support responsible, sustainable waste management. They would have us go backwards. Yukoners have spoken; they want us to go forward. That is what we are doing.

Mr. Istchenko: So, the Minister of Community Services listed the failures when it comes to consulting communities and it doesn't stop there. The people of Keno have also been asking the minister to properly consult them before he shuts down their transfer station. Residents there have also expressed their dissatisfaction with the minister's efforts to engage them in a meaningful way. One resident told CBC — and I quote: "It kind of got off in a really heated way ... What took me back was the minister, pretty much after introducing himself, just stated from the get-go, 'Keno is expensive' — and that sort of set the tone that didn't resonate well with residents."

So, it's becoming a theme for this minister that communities don't appreciate his aggressive approach. He is straining relationships with communities and burning bridges. So, will he agree to reset and return to Keno with an open mind to listen to the community's input and some good ideas they have about solid waste?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I was at the same meeting, Mr. Speaker. I heard the concerns of the community, because

that's what we're doing. We're going to all the communities and hearing those concerns. I am more than happy to go out and meet with any municipality or group of citizens across the territory, and I will continue to do that in the coming weeks, months, and years.

Mr. Speaker, I will say that my honourable colleague has gone to those communities several times and talked about this plan. This hasn't been sprung on them by surprise. This has been years in the making. It is going forward.

The minister who has been taken off the bench and put back in rotation — he is now — he's the critic of "hard stop and reverse". We're not doing that, Mr. Speaker. We are actually going forward. We're going to actually put in place rules for waste management, throughout the territory, that meet the needs of the territory and the territory's citizens and takes it into the modern waste management era.

Question re: Condominium insurance costs

Ms. McLeod: The cost of insurance has skyrocketed over the past few years. Further, it has become increasingly difficult to get insurance for condos in the Yukon. As a result, local condo corps have seen their insurance rates skyrocket in recent years. For example, one condo corporation has seen their insurance rates increase by an average of 35 percent per year over the last five years. Increased insurance costs result in increased condo fees, which will make housing more expensive and reduce the supply of rental condos, as investors will not want to take the risks, especially since rents cannot be increased to recoup these costs.

So, what is the government doing to address that growing issue of insurance costs in this territory?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First of all, I want to just commend the many folks who are volunteering on condo corporations across the Yukon. We have seen a real build-out of strata-titled infrastructure, and with that, we have seen a lot more individuals who are in these roles.

The Official Opposition, as well as government, has white papers that have been shared with them that really define some questions around: How do we move forward? Are there ways for government to be able to look at pooled insurance type of policies?

At this point, the Yukon Housing Corporation is sharing information with the Finance department. We are still looking through this, as is Justice. It's still a work in progress. Essentially, what we're looking at are best practices across the country. We know that prices have gone up, and there are many factors that are there, but the government is committed to working with condo corporations to look at solutions.

Strata-titled infrastructure is going to be key in the Yukon for us to deal with a massive need for housing, as we go forward, so I will report back to the House as we look at different solutions. We are going to continue to work with the condo corporations and the rest of the departments.

Ms. McLeod: One of the causes is that there are now only about three insurers active in the Yukon market, down from about 11 a few years ago. The insurance market is increasingly considering condos as a non-profitable sector. A

lack of competition is driving up costs and reducing the availability of insurance. The risks that are being covered for condos are shrinking, with things like flood being impossible to get, and the deductibles of at least one major condo in Whitehorse increased from \$10,000 to \$100,000.

This is unsustainable and may eventually leave condo owners with uninsured assets that they cannot resell. Will the government agree to launch a comprehensive study into what legislative or regulatory tools the Government of Yukon can use to address this growing issue?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, I would like to say first that we are taking this very seriously, whether the term that we use for the work and due diligence is a "comprehensive review" or a "cross-departmental team", or "task team", or "tiger team". I think what we will commit to is that we certainly take this issue very seriously.

I think that it is important to note that, even as we watch news feeds over the last week, this is going to continue to be a challenge. We are seeing great impacts from climate change. These are things that are going to drive pricing. We see this from coast to coast to coast. It is an issue that is being talked about in many different corners and with many different governments.

We are going to continue to look at solutions to this. I agree that, if there are ways for the government to lean in or step in, that's something that we need to look at. Again, this is something that has built over time, even to the point where a number of condominium complexes across the country had problems with water damage and leaking just from flood infrastructure. All of these things have been driving the costs.

As the member opposite said — which is absolutely correct — now we have fewer companies to provide this service. So, again, we are committed to this, and we will keep working with folks to come up with solutions.

Ms. McLeod: It has become increasingly difficult to get insurance at all for condos in the territory. One condo corporation was a month past their renewal date before they were able to find a new insurer, as their former provider had left the Yukon market. As the number of condos in the territory increases, we need to take urgent action on this so that a lot of condo owners don't find themselves living in uninsured homes.

What will the government do to address this issue in the short term?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: On November 26, I met with some condo owners about this very issue. I have tasked the Department of Community Services to look into this issue, because we do realize that, when you are dealing with condo insurance and trying to make sure that you are protecting your investment, it is important. We heard the same concerns about the number of brokers here in town and sort of a decline in the number of companies actually providing condo insurance, but the department does not believe that is true. I have asked for an analysis about who is providing insurance to the condo industry and how we might increase it, because it is a growth market for the territory. With our territory's economy going as great as it is, we are going to see more condo development, and we really

have to tackle this issue. Community Services and my officials are looking into this matter as we speak.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed. We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOTIONS RESPECTING COMMITTEE REPORTS

Motion respecting Committee Reports No. 1

Clerk: Motion respecting Committee Reports No. 1, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Mostyn.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Chair of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges:

THAT the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges' first report, presented to the House on October 7, 2021, be concurred in; and

THAT the amendment to Standing Order 11 of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, recommended by the committee, limiting tribute speeches to three and a half minutes be adopted.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not going to be very long this afternoon; I'll be relatively brief. The Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges met a couple of months ago and reviewed the rules surrounding tributes. The committee agreed to limit the amount of time we spend paying tribute to Yukoners and events of local significance to three and a half minutes. I urge the House to respect the committee's decision and adopt this change.

With that, I'll take my seat and hear from the members opposite.

Mr. Cathers: We are pleased to see this motion coming forward. This decision was made by the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges. I believe it was in September that the meeting occurred. It is unfortunate to see government wait this long, and I do have to remind this House that, during debate on a motion brought forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition on our first Wednesday of this Sitting that proposed changing the guillotine clause, as it's commonly called, to prevent legislation being passed without it going through a full debate — at that time, the government's primary argument against it, as stated by the Member for Whitehorse West, was that it should be dealt with through the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges.

The member and the government committed to calling the next meeting of SCREP before November 12, but that's unfortunately just one more addition to their growing list of broken promises.

So, I will not be long. We will support this motion. It is intended to avoid what has become the practice of government of spending more time on tributes, eating into the time for debate of legislation, and capping it to a reasonable amount of time. We do urge the government to follow through on the commitment — that has now been overshot by a few weeks —

of the chair of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges to actually call another meeting of that body.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I just want to share a few thoughts. I wasn't intending to stand today, but there were some things there that I think I would like to reply to.

First of all, with respect to tributes, the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges did meet. I think that it was a good conversation. I will have to check back, but I do believe that the full debate was three and a half minutes, but if we were going to have a time when we needed a little bit more time — for example, if we were giving a commemorative tribute — we could, at House Leaders, have a conversation and then alert that to the Speaker to say that we were going to allow it to go over now and then, with the acknowledgement of House Leaders.

There are many things that we wish to tribute here in this House, and there have been some very beautiful tributes — both long and short — but we wanted to try to make sure that there was enough time in the House for other business. If I look back — and I did just last night, as I always do at the close of every Sitting. I look back to try to see — and I compared the five years of us as a government and the five years of the Yukon Party as a government. The numbers that I have is that they called 643 tributes and we have called 494, so we have been limiting the number of tributes as well. While there are times when they go over three and a half minutes here — and usually we discuss that at House Leaders' meetings and talk about trying to keep them limited to three or three and a half minutes. There were times in the past under the Yukon Party government, in the 33rd Legislature, when there were many tributes — five in a day — and very long tributes. What we are doing here, through the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, is agreeing to come to a shorter timeline.

I am looking forward to the full agenda — the work plan that the committee has laid out — because the guillotine clause is one that I would like to debate in the standing committee. I look forward to that debate with all members of this Legislature to talk about how we can build in time limits to manage the legislation — that terrific work of the legislative drafters from the legislative counsel office where they do all that work to try to get us here — months of work — so that it isn't then played politics with here in this House. I think that it is important that we get there.

When I looked at how often the Standing Committee of Rules, Elections and Privileges has been called in the past under the Yukon Party, it was not called. It was not convened. It did not do work. I am very happy that work is happening now, and I look forward to this debate today.

Ms. Tredger: I'll start by saying that we support the recommendation of SCREP — the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges. I just want to say a little bit about why I support this motion.

I was at the meeting where this was discussed. I think that sometimes, as a fairly new member of this Legislature, I try

really hard not to forget what we're here to do. What we're here to do is to make the Yukon better for Yukoners. I think that choosing our words carefully and speaking for a short amount of time helps that; it helps us to have useful discussions. I hope that what we try to do all the time in here is to choose our words carefully — choose words that are going to make things better for Yukoners.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I want to correct the record myself a little bit this afternoon. The motion that the Member for Lake Laberge referred to — where there was a commitment made — the motion never passed, Mr. Speaker. There is no commitment unless a motion passed. The members opposite did not pass a motion, and therefore it's not binding, Mr. Speaker.

I will also maintain that SCREP is the proper place to make changes to the rules of this Chamber, Mr. Speaker. The Clerk's office does a fantastic job — I really have a to commend them because they do a fantastic job researching these ideas. When we have ideas to change the rules of the House, it's really incumbent on us to do the research and see what the implications are of our actions. Sometimes in this House, we make decisions on the fly, and they really do not take into account the entirety of the issue. The Clerk's office, in this case, does a great job actually researching and looking at the implications of some of the decisions we make as politicians that we may not have thought about at the time.

I think that working through SCREP — through a committee that can take a moment and actually consider all of the implications of what we're talking about in governing this Chamber, looking at it from a wider context, what happens in the rest of the country, and making sure that we're not stepping in any unforeseen traps that we just didn't consider — is really important. I think that the Clerk's office does a tremendous job doing that.

The member opposite is wrong again. He said that we had more tributes. It's actually not, as my colleague has noted — 643 tributes under their last five years and 494 under ours. We would love to do more tributes, but this House actually took an action that restricted the number of tributes that we gave, so we are living by those rules.

I made a commitment to hold four SCREP meetings a year — the member opposite said that I haven't called one. He should check his calendar because there is an invitation to the next SCREP meeting. I look forward to seeing him at that meeting in the coming weeks.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat and look forward to the next SCREP decisions that we take in the coming months.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion respecting Committee Reports No. 1 agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. Blake): Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 202: *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — continued

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Education — continued

Hon. Ms. McLean: Madam Chair, I would like to again thank our officials for attending today: Nicole Morgan, Deputy Minister of Education, and Andrea McIntyre, director of Finance. Thank you so much for being here once again for this important debate.

Thank you again for the opportunity to rise today to speak to the Education supplementary budget, Vote 3, Bill No. 202.

I would like to go back to some of the questions that were asked in previous debates, but I would like to start with some other comments first. A foundational piece of this budget is for early learning and childcare. I am happy that we had some debate around that yesterday. Our government is dedicated to a child-centred approach for implementing accessible, affordable, inclusive, and high-quality universal early learning and childcare for Yukon families.

The agreement that we have reached with Canada symbolizes this and enhances Yukon's early learning and childcare funding program, launched in April, which directly reduces the monthly cost to parents by \$700 per month per child attending full-time, licensed daycare programs. We are making childcare more affordable for Yukon families, increasing accessibility, and focusing on increasing the number of licensed childcare spaces available in Yukon.

These investments will help us reach our goal of providing every Yukon family with access to high-quality, affordable childcare with robust and inclusive learning programs. While we were able to significantly reduce fees for Yukon families with children in licensed childcare, under the new universal childcare model with Canada's support, we can expand the provision of an average of \$10 a day for licensed childcare spaces.

We are working with operators and indigenous governments to support building this capacity, and we will continue to offer territorial funding to support start-up costs among all operators, including for-profit centres. We have, and I do have the list with me, in terms of all of our licensed childcare centres — there are 77 licensed childcare centres and family day homes, of which 23 are family day homes; eight are First Nation-owned and -operated; and 46 are other-owned and -operated. One childcare centre is a rural sustainability project — the Watson Lake daycare; the remaining 76 are funded under the universal program.

We are supporting cultural enhancement goals for implementing early learning programs that feature place-based, on-the-land, and experiential learning; local indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being; traditional language learning, and more. I will speak a bit more about the cultural enhancement piece, because I think that it is an important new feature that we just announced recently.

We are delivering inclusive, accessible programming and one-on-one childcare educator support for Yukon children with additional needs. Enhancing our early learning and childcare program provides benefits to all Yukoners. Not only is this an investment that benefits our children's development, it's an investment that benefits our local economy and equality in the workforce. We know that women face unique and disproportionate economic barriers and work challenges, which were heightened this year by the COVID-19 pandemic. I've had a chance to speak about that, particularly when we debated the Women and Gender Equity supplementary budget, one that is very close to my heart and is an important priority for our government. By providing greater access to affordable, high-quality, and inclusive childcare, we are reducing barriers to entering the workforce and ensuring that the proper supports are in place for women and families when returning to work.

I look forward to continuing working with Canada, indigenous governments, First Nation partners in Yukon, and other stakeholders toward ensuring all Yukon families have access to affordable, inclusive, high-quality early learning and childcare.

In respect to the member's questions yesterday, I would like to provide more clarity. All licensed childcare operators have the same access to funding under the universal program — First Nation- or privately operated centres. The universal program is designed to limit the fees the operator can charge, with the goal of Yukon families paying an average of \$10 or less. Currently, families in Yukon are averaging childcare costs of less than \$10 per day.

These are two funding streams under the universal program. Parent fee reduction is the same across all licensed childcare operators. Operating funding has slight differences in the eligible amounts, based on whether the childcare centre is in Whitehorse or in rural Yukon. The higher wage enhancements and operating reductions are meant to offset the higher costs of providing programming in rural Yukon.

The model provides flexibility for the Yukon to address the unique context and needs of the territory, First Nation governments, rural communities, and childcare providers. Why one parent pays no fees versus another parent who pays reduced fees is complex, as every operator fee structure is different. Each operator determines their program fees, which must be within 10 percent of Yukon average. If an operator has set their program fees to \$800 per month for a full-time toddler, the parent fee would be \$100 per month. A different operator may set the same program fee at \$700 per month, which would reduce it to no parent fee.

Operators, whether under the administration of a First Nation government or privately operated, have much flexibility in how they deliver their early learning and childcare. Some examples that impact the cost of operating a program are, but not limited to, the wages they pay their educators; whether they own or lease a building; whether they are for-profit or non-profit; whether they are owned and operated by a First Nation government; the business model they operate under, such as a day home, childcare centre, after-school program, or otherwise; the hours they operate, including full time, part time, after

school, or evenings; the type of programming; and the capacity, including the number of spaces the childcare centre is licensed for.

The above examples are why a family may pay no fees or reduced fees. It all depends on the model of the operator.

What is important, I think, to reiterate is that all licensed centres have equal opportunity to access the funding available under the universal early learning and childcare program.

I wanted to talk about a few other really notable features within early learning and childcare. I am pleased that we announced that the governments of Canada and Yukon are supporting a benefits program for early childcare educators. Early childcare educators working in licensed Yukon early learning and childcare programs will have significantly more access to comprehensive insurance benefits, thanks to the launch of the early learning and childcare benefits funding program.

The program provides compensation for up to eight percent of staff wages for employers to select and offers a comprehensive benefits package that meets the needs of their employees from a registered Canadian insurance provider. A combined total of \$800,000 in funding from the governments of Canada and Yukon is available to every licensed early learning and childcare program in the Yukon, including operators currently offering benefits for employees. Those operators can also receive retroactive funding for providing their employees with benefits from April 1, 2021.

As of April 1, 2022, providing benefits for early childcare educators will be an integral part of Yukon's universal childcare program. Moving forward, benefits for educators will be considered a standard part of Yukon early learning and childcare funding programs. Following a child-centred approach, the governments of Canada and Yukon are committed to supporting access to early learning and childcare that is high-quality, affordable, inclusive, and flexible.

I would like to share now how operators can access the funding for benefits. Licensed early learning and childcare programs that are currently offering comprehensive benefits to employees from a registered Canadian insurance provider may submit a benefits funding application to the Early Learning and Child Care unit at the Department of Education before January 1, 2022. This funding will cover the period from April 1, 2021, to March 31, 2022.

Licensed early learning and childcare programs interested in offering comprehensive benefits to employees from a registered Canadian insurance provider will register in a benefits program and then submit a benefits funding application to our Early Learning and Child Care unit at the Department of Education before February 15, 2022. Operators can also access a group benefit plan offered by their local chamber of commerce.

How will this funding help increase access to childcare spaces in Yukon communities? Each community in Yukon is very unique. While there is no one-size-fits-all solution, we are working closely with community partners to best develop universal childcare options that work for Yukoners where they live. Building capacity for new childcare centres in our

communities continues to be a significant focus for us. As I have mentioned, as well as working collaboratively to identify and respond to the unique needs of the communities and their early learning programs, we are working with community partners, First Nation governments, other partners, Yukon University, and other stakeholders to identify opportunities, expand local education opportunities, and create career development pathways for early childhood education.

Our benefits funding program is designed to support the recruitment and retention of a qualified early learning and childcare workforce. The recruitment and retention of enough qualified staff to meet the minimum required education to child staffing ratios has been raised by many Yukon communities as a significant challenge. By increasing the return value of the ECE career path, such as with this dedicated funding for benefits, we will see the number of qualified educators increase in a more desirable Yukon job market. More qualified ECEs means more spaces available to children in early learning and childcare programs.

We are determined to find creative solutions to support children and families in every Yukon community in a way that works for each community.

Another really exciting area — I would like to highlight that, as part of the Canada/Yukon-wide early learning and childcare agreement over the next two years, licensed early learning and childcare programs and early childhood educators in the Yukon will have access to \$800,000 in cultural enhancement funding to develop: enhanced, culturally rich early learning programs and environments focused on Yukon First Nation ways of knowing, doing, learning, and being; place-based outdoor experiential learning opportunities; francophone language and culture; and languages and cultures of other diverse populations.

Funding can be accessed through two initiatives: the cultural enhancement project for licensed early learning and childcare operators valued at \$2,000 per licensed family day home or \$5,000 per licensed centre; and cultural resource funding for Yukon's early childhood educators to develop resource kits, providing materials to support culturally responsive programming valued at \$500 for use in licensed early learning programs.

I'll do a few more highlights and examples of the cultural enhancement project that programs can apply for. Recognizing Yukon First Nation ways of knowing, doing, and being and Yukon's diverse cultures and backgrounds, the cultural enhancement project funding has been created to support licensed early learning and childcare programs to provide experiences and programming that supports children to develop a sense of place. Projects could feature: place-based, on-the-land, and experiential learning opportunities; Yukon First Nation ways of knowing, doing, and being; francophone Yukon language and culture; languages and cultures of other diverse populations; and experiences and learning opportunities to ensure that the culture of children is acknowledged and valued.

Using these criteria, licensed programs are encouraged to apply for funds that meet the diverse needs of their learners

while deepening children's relationships with the land and place. This could look like field trips, elder visits, outdoor experiences, hands-on experiences with guest speakers and community experts, materials such as wall tents, children's snowshoes, kicksleds, and more.

Recognizing Yukon First Nation ways of knowing, doing, and being and the Yukon's diverse cultures and backgrounds, the cultural resource funding has been created to support licensed early learning and childcare programs and early childhood educators to provide culturally responsive programming and materials to children they are nurturing. In terms of the resource kits, they would feature: place-based, on-the-land experiential learning opportunities; Yukon First Nation ways of knowing, doing, and being; francophone Yukon language and culture; languages and cultures in other diverse populations; and those experiences and opportunities to ensure that the culture of children is acknowledged and valued. Using this criteria, programs and educators are invited to create resource kits that meet the diverse needs of their learners while deepening children's connection with diverse cultures, backgrounds, and experiences.

I will potentially get into some of the other answers related to schools.

I am assuming that the members opposite are going to move back to schools. I am not sure.

I am really looking forward to more debate today on the Department of Education and our supplementary budget in Vote 3.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for her opening statement and welcome back the officials. I know that the minister tabled a number of legislative returns today related to Education questions. I thank her, and I thank her department officials especially for getting those turned around so quickly for us and onto the floor of the Legislature. I obviously haven't had a chance to review them, so some of my questions here today may be contained in those legislative returns.

I just wanted to start with a couple of questions about the COVID-19 staff numbers that are affected in Education. I know that the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission tabled a legislative return that I haven't had the opportunity to see yet, so the information may be included in there. I am curious if the minister can tell us how many staff are now on leave without pay. Obviously, the mandate came in yesterday. Can she give us a breakdown of how many are urban and how many are rural, as well as any other breakdown information that she is able to provide without violating any confidentiality aspects with respect to human resources?

I know that the minister is responsible for funding a number of non-governmental organizations, or NGOs. I am curious if she has any idea how many of those were affected directly by the vaccine mandate, and if she has any idea or has begun any work to determine how many staff are affected at those NGOs that the department funds.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, vaccination is one of the most effective ways to limit the transmission of COVID-19 in schools. We see right now the positive impacts of vaccination

on our secondary schools, which have significantly fewer exposure notices than elementary at this point.

I have done a return around this. Approximately 96 percent of employees of the Department of Education have completed their attestations. As of 11:30 a.m. on December 1, a total of 22 regular employees — including 13 teachers, nine EAs, and no Yukon First Nation language teachers — are unattested. So, we are talking about 22 regular employees. This does not include employees who have an active exemption request being evaluated. These numbers may increase if exemption requests are denied. That is the process that is in play right now.

I will endeavour to bring back a legislative return on the non-governmental organizations that the member has asked questions about, but I can verify that all volunteers, folks, or organizations providing services within schools that are non-government have a requirement to be fully vaccinated.

A good example of that is the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, which works in many of our schools throughout the territory, if not all. They require their staff to be fully vaccinated, so that is one example that I have.

The numbers are very small, so I will not break down the number I have given around the 22 regular employees by urban or rural. What I can say is that most schools have experienced minimal impacts to operations from the implementation of the mandatory vaccination requirement. A small number of schools were able to minimize impact by adjusting student learning groups or deploying teachers on call. Of course, the Department of Education continues to closely monitor any potential impacts to operations due to unvaccinated employees. We are prepared to make operational adjustments, as needed, to ensure minimal impact on schools.

We continue to encourage employees on leave without pay to verify their vaccination status with at least one dose. That can happen now.

I will stop there, and hopefully I have been able to answer the questions for the member opposite.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for that. I understand that the small numbers may not allow her to give us any further detail. I appreciate the detail she did share: Four percent of officials have not yet attested to either the first or being fully vaccinated — the 22 educators, 13 teachers, and nine EAs — I believe is the number she gave.

I am curious if the minister has any numbers with respect to teachers or EAs who, prior to the deadline coming into effect, opted for early retirement. Would the minister have any of those numbers for us here today?

Hon. Ms. McLean: In terms of where we're at with other folks who may have decided to leave their position, yes, I acknowledge that there are folks who have left their position or have taken early retirement. The number is too small to report. It is very, very minimal. I don't want to breach any privacy or confidentiality around folks' personal choices. I just want to emphasize again that the numbers that I have given are as of December 1, at approximately 11:30. On December 1, we had 22 regular employees, and that includes 13 teachers and nine EAs, who are unattested. These numbers may change, because folks can choose to become vaccinated and do an

attestation now, and they will be reinstated and will then be required to have a second vaccination by January 30. There would be another attestation process that would occur around that time for people to be able to report that.

Mr. Kent: With due respect to the minister on the numbers for early retirement, I know of at least one that was mentioned at a public meeting that we attended. I wasn't asking for specific schools or urban/rural breakdown; I was just curious as to how many individuals opted for early retirement once the mandate was put in place and perhaps if they had indicated that was the reason that they were retiring.

I will move on to some other questions. I know that time is tight here this afternoon. I did want to talk about the student transportation, or the school bus, issues. I had the opportunity to raise this earlier this week in Question Period. As the minister no doubt knows, there have been a number of routes in and around Whitehorse in particular where either the entire day has been cancelled for school bus service or a portion of the day. I think I went on the contractor's app earlier today, and I believe there are two buses that either aren't running in full or are partially running, even today.

Recognizing that there are driver shortages — and I asked the minister the other day if there were some specific actions that she could point to that she or her government are taking to assist the contractor to alleviate this driver shortage — and often, Question Period doesn't give us an opportunity to get into too much detail on those types of things, so I'll ask again.

Can the minister just give us a sense of what specific actions they are contemplating in working with the contractor to alleviate the driver shortage that is affecting many routes throughout the territory, but mostly in and around the Whitehorse area?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I want to go back to the previous question, just for a moment, around staff who may have decided to leave their employment with the Department of Education and Yukon government. Within the Department of Education, again, the number is small — I can count on one hand how many. I just want to be clear that it's not a huge number of folks who have left their position. Again, that is a personal choice. It could be for a lot of reasons why folks may decide to take retirement or decide to leave their position. There may be a lot of reasons and factors there. I am not going to speculate fully on that, but it's around this timing.

Moving on to the work that the Department of Education is doing around busing, we have a contractor — Standard Bus — that provides busing services for our children's transportation to and from school. We acknowledge that, like many other jurisdictions, Yukon is facing a driver shortage. We are working with our contractor to support them in their recruitment efforts. That is something that we are doing. Also, I just want to say that, in terms of working with rural communities, working with some of our own superintendents — through school councils and through other community contacts — we are working to identify folks who could potentially take on that role in a community.

I want to emphasize, as well, that there is considerable training that has to occur for people to take on these positions,

and it is definitely during a challenging time around navigating a global pandemic. I can say that, right now, we do have — and Standard Bus has brought folks in from other jurisdictions. We have had folks from BC, and we now have at least one driver from Alberta who is here. Standard Bus is dealing with driver shortages as best they can, including, as I have said, sending up drivers from out-of-territory when and where they are available. We are working with them to develop contingency plans to help ensure that cancellations do not affect the same route for multiple days in a row. I have met with a lot of school councils, and busing has come up at many of them. I think that we have had something like 16 or 17 school council meetings in the last couple of months, and so there have been a lot of discussions with communities and with schools across the territory. This has certainly come up at a number of them. It is, of course, around this driver shortage, and it is really great that school councils are willing to help to mitigate some of the issues around this. The goal is always to ensure that our busing services are providing the service that is needed and such a huge part of having children get to and from school safely.

I want to thank the staff at the Department of Education for being so quick to get the busing schedules out this year and to ensure that folks knew and were assigned a seat on the bus. We have had driver shortages this year, but we have not had these spot shortages. I know that it was a struggle last year because we had less capacity and we were not able to transport as many children. There have been fewer issues around that this year, and I am happy about that. We will continue to work with Standard Bus to mitigate the issues. I want to also emphasize that the Department of Education works with the school busing committee on matters affecting the delivery of shared busing services, so we will continue to have those discussions.

As I've stated, we have had many, many school council meetings over the last couple of months and have committed to working with school councils on any issues that they are having and that they want us to work collaboratively on — and really opened up those lines of communication. So, we will continue to work with them at that level and to work with Standard Bus to ensure bus service for Yukon children.

Mr. Kent: I do have some specific student transportation issues that constituents have brought forward that I think are better to share in a letter or an e-mail with the minister. I will do that as well for those constituents.

Hopefully by this time next year, we will be through the pandemic and we can regroup on recruitment and retention numbers for the contractor and what types of actions and support the government was able to provide to ensure that we had a full complement of staff who are working for the busing contractor.

I do want to go back and ask a few questions about the First Nation school board and just some other issues that have emerged since we last talked about it.

As we know, there are five school councils, including the Watson Lake joint council that voted to put it to a referendum in January on whether or not they should become members of the school board. There are a number of petitions now, I believe — more than just the original two. There are additional ones in

the Whitehorse area that are out and looking for the 20-percent threshold for signatures. Of course, we know that those results won't be known until the week of December 13. The minister has mentioned that, if those are successful, they would also be part of January's referendum. For us and for some members of the school community, there is a sense that it might seem like it's a bit of a rushed process.

The question for the minister is: How will the minister ensure that there will be an opportunity for fair communication in school communities that have gone through the petition process rather than the school council motion process, which was due at the end of October? How will there be an opportunity for fair communication for those other petition communities during the referendum process? Because with the December 13 closure and then schools being out for a couple of weeks over the Christmas and holiday break, the voting, I believe, starts on January 11 when the voting opportunity opens, and those polls are open until the end of January.

We are getting some questions from some Yukoners in these petition areas. They don't feel that there is enough time for proper and informed communication in such a condensed time and given the time of year.

Again, the question is: What is the minister doing to ensure that the process is fair?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thanks for the question around the Yukon First Nation school board process. I have been clear, I think, in terms of where we are right now.

As of today, we are in receipt of the school councils that have passed resolutions. There are five communities but six schools, because Watson Lake has a combined school council. We have received those. Those, we know, are going to a referendum in January. The deadline for petitions — and those who have taken out petition packages and requested them through the Chief Electoral Officer have until December 13 to complete them. I am not in receipt of any complete petitions at this point, but that is the deadline. Then there will be a process to verify and do the due diligence around verifying the criteria for a complete petition.

We will continue, as we have to date, with communities that have chosen to go through their school councils and have issued the resolutions. We are currently working with communities. The Department of Education has offered to support school communities that have triggered a referendum in whatever community-based way that individual communities prefer, including information and resources grounded in the *Education Act* — all factual and neutral information — and that is our commitment to work with school communities. Of course, the date is coming in the next week or so. I will anxiously be waiting for that day as well to then determine next steps, but the information is already flowing to communities that have launched these referendums, and it would be a matter of extending that and modifying to the needs of any particular community. Our commitment is to ensure that folks are informed and well aware of what this process is, what it will mean to have a school go under the Yukon First Nation school board, and how that process will work.

I remain committed. This certainly is an area that our government is committed to. We do see Yukon First Nation education as a means to reconciliation. I am committed, of course, to continuing to work with Yukon First Nations in this regard. It is a high priority and within my mandate letter to support the creation of a Yukon First Nation school board. That is what we are doing.

Mr. Kent: I have just a couple more questions about the First Nation school board process and what will happen after the referendum date. I am curious, from a capital perspective, if there are any plans to build a First Nation school in Whitehorse — a stand-alone school similar, I guess, to what the francophone community has with École Émilie Tremblay as well as Paul-Émile Mercier high school. Are there any plans in the works for that?

I have just a couple of HR questions. We understand that a portion of the curriculum at any schools that choose to become part of the First Nation school board process will be changed. I am kind of curious as to what the plans are to have teachers be given the proper support and training before implementation or during implementation of those curriculum changes. If some teachers end up working at a school that is governed by the First Nation school board but perhaps find that it is not the right fit for them or, for one reason or another, don't want to work at that particular school, will the department be making any accommodations to transfer those individuals to other schools that are run by the department and are not governed by the First Nation school board?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. This is an important mandate for our government. I will start with some discussion around the question about a new build of a First Nation school.

We continue to work with school communities on planning for their short-, medium-, and long-term facility needs. We are pleased that work is underway on new schools at Whistle Bend and Burwash Landing. The Government of Yukon has a five-year capital plan, as the member opposite knows, that includes school replacement/renovation projects to ensure that all buildings are safe and suitable for many years to come. The plan is based on current information and facility assessments. Should needs change, this plan is flexible and may be adjusted, for example, if safety issues were identified.

At this point, we have the commitment around the building of the Whistle Bend and the Burwash schools. Other school projects in the five-year capital plan include, as I have already stated: the new elementary school in Whistle Bend; the replacement of an existing, aging Whitehorse school, which has not been identified at this point; modular classrooms for short- and medium-term school needs at Selkirk Elementary, Hidden Valley, and Robert Service School; and as I have already stated, we are working with the Kluane First Nation to relocate the Kluane school to Burwash Landing. That work is underway and it's exciting. I am really looking forward to seeing the results of that long-standing request and need for that area of our territory.

The ongoing stabilization of the Ross River School is part of the plan, along with the Selkirk parking lot replacement and parking lot upgrade and upgrades at other schools.

Planning for 2021-22 processes include some of the following areas: \$10.525 million for the Whistle Bend elementary school; \$500,000 for the Burwash school planning; \$2.5 million for stabilization for the Ross River School; \$1.7 million to rebuild the modular classrooms at Selkirk and Hidden Valley; \$1 million for the Selkirk parking lot; \$4 million for the Robert Service School modular replacement, which is 100-percent recoverable from the Investing in Canada infrastructure program. That is where we are at there in terms of what our commitments are right now within our five-year capital plan.

In terms of your questions around the curriculum that would be used for schools that may come under the governance of a First Nation school board, the BC curriculum will be followed as it is now. Learning styles — there will be other ways of learning implemented, and those types of decisions will be made by the First Nation trustees, but the curriculum will remain.

In terms of your questions around teachers, I'll be clear here that all teachers will remain employees of Government of Yukon and will remain under the YTA. We have a collective agreement. There are clear procedures within the collective agreement around transfer procedures, also governed by the *Education Labour Relations Act*. These are processes that will remain in place, and all employees will remain the employees of the Government of Yukon. That is the case with the francophone school board that we have been working with for some time now. We have some good experience in how that works and have built good relationships and worked through issues that may have been there in the past. We're on good, solid ground around that agreement. It's going very well, so I think it is a good example.

I know that the Yukon First Nations Chiefs Committee on Education had meetings with the trustees and executive for the francophone school board, and they have supported them in terms of providing information around the real, on-the-ground logistics of running a school board.

These are exciting times for the Yukon. This is a huge mandate commitment. I'm happy to be supporting the First Nations Chiefs Committee on Education to see this vision that is a long time coming in our territory in terms of First Nation responsibility over the education of First Nation children. As you are aware, that could potentially expand to others if we ratify a school board and move toward the election of trustees and actually get to the establishment of a First Nation school board.

Education in the Yukon will look different and rightfully so. We've had self-government in our territory for a very long time and our government is putting the time and effort to work through reconciliation. This is a big part of reconciliation.

We know that the education system — this is not news, I hope, to anyone in the House — has failed First Nation children on many fronts. Some of us came through the system; some of us didn't. That's a fact. Our aim is better outcomes for First

Nation children and all Yukon children. I remain committed to that as Minister of Education. I anxiously await the outcomes of these referendums and next steps. I am certainly not shying away from the work that's in front of us.

Mr. Kent: I want to close out my questions here today on some capital projects that are in the department. The first one that I did want to see if the minister can update us on is with respect to a partnership between Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nation governments to purchase 1,300 devices to improve access to technology for Yukon First Nation students in kindergarten to grade 12. I think that the commitment between the two levels of government — Yukon government and First Nation governments — was \$950,000 in total. Of that, \$478,000 or so was the Yukon government's portion. I am curious if the minister can give us an update on the number of devices that were purchased and if that entire amount was expended. This comes from a news release in 2020.

Hon. Ms. McLean: The Department of Education is continually working to enhance the integration of technology into school programming to meet the needs of Yukon students, including ensuring that educational technology is secure, reliable, and equitable and that there is equitable access. During COVID-19, online and digital learning technologies and resources were, and continue to be, a key part of modern learning and are important tools for blended learning and continued learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. I think that there are some good examples in Yukon just this year where schools had to move toward blended learning, which is a very big part of our "learning through COVID" strategy. The Yukon government has budgeted, in the 2021-22 year, \$2.6 million for education technology. I know that the member opposite is asking a pretty specific question around learning devices from the previous budget. To further support equitable learning opportunities for students, the Government of Yukon partnered with Yukon First Nations and Yukon University to purchase devices to support Yukon First Nation students, and this was in last year's budget.

This was before my time as minister. I do not have the exact numbers, but what I can say is that, when I have met with school communities, this has come up a number of times, in terms of the value of the support that was provided, and it continues to be very important, as we learn through this school year in these sometimes challenging times where we have had to go to blended learning or, in the case of Tantalus School, where they went completely to remote learning.

This year, the Government of Yukon has made another example of working to support students and their learning. This year, the Government of Yukon is making a donation of retired Apple classroom computer devices to the Computers for Schools Yukon recycling program for K to 12 students. The Department of Education is currently investing in upgrading school computing devices, IT infrastructure, and bandwidth access. These are all areas that we continue to work on to ensure that we are able to continue to provide blended learning for students. I will ensure that we return that specific number to the member opposite and the distribution number to communities.

Mr. Kent: Yes, I would appreciate that. I think that it is a great program. I know that, in speaking with officials at the time, we had asked about whether or not this was something that Jordan's Principle would be providing, but it was my understanding that Jordan's Principle had sort of been saturated with requests for this type of purchase. That is why I was curious as to how many of the potential 1,300 devices were purchased and delivered. I look forward to getting that number from the minister when she gets a chance to provide it.

I know that the minister talked briefly about some of the capital projects. I just want to touch on a few of them that are in the five-year capital plan. The first one is the Burwash school. In a joint news release with the Kluane First Nation on January 28 of this year, there was a tender for an owner's advisor posted on Yukon Bids and Tenders. The owner's advisor was to provide expertise and guidance on this new school project. The tender was scheduled to close in February 2021. I just did a quick look on that Bids and Tenders website and was unable to find who the owner's advisor is. I don't need the name, obviously, of the contractor, but I am just curious if that has been awarded and when it was awarded and a breakdown of the \$500,000 — which is identified in this year's budget — of what has been spent so far.

Hon. Ms. McLean: This is a great project as part of our commitment to reconciliation and long-term capital planning for Yukon schools. We're absolutely pleased to be working in partnership with Kluane First Nation to relocate the Kluane school from Destruction Bay to Burwash Landing.

Moving the current Kluane school from Destruction Bay to Burwash Landing has been a long-standing request from the Kluane First Nation. We continue to work with the Kluane First Nation on this project. We know that there definitely have been a few delays here and there, but I'll get to where we're at, because it's exciting.

There has been an extended election period for Kluane First Nation. We understand now that the Kluane First Nation completed their election for chief and council on November 19, 2021. I would like to congratulate Chief Dickson on his re-election. I'm really looking forward to getting out to a meeting with him. We signed, in June 2020 — not me, but the previous minister — signed a memorandum of understanding outlining the commitment to plan and construct a new school in Burwash Landing. Although I did not sign that, I am absolutely honouring the MOU.

Where we're at right now — a community consultation happened on November 24 and 25. It was intended to solicit feedback and preferences from the community on the four concept designs that we currently have from the owner's advisor, which is the Taylor Architecture Group.

The next community consultation is currently scheduled for January 26 and 27. We're hoping to get out. I've been wanting to get out to the community since taking on this role and had hoped to get out there in June, when we were planning to have the CYFN general assembly. Chief Dickson, at the time, was excited about showing potential locations for the school. So, I'm hoping to get out there, but we may not be able to.

We will continue to monitor current COVID-19 guidelines and community travel and expectations from the community.

In terms of the dollars that are spent out of the \$500,000 right now, we have an actual expense of \$25,498. We have committed \$349,502, and this includes the dollars for the owner's advisor contract, which I have talked about — the Taylor Architecture Group.

The functional program is now finalized, and community consultations are on track to look at the concept designs. The dollars are committed for the year, and it is exciting work. The new school in Burwash Landing will allow Kluane First Nation to learn and thrive in their own community. We continue to work in collaboration with Kluane First Nation to move the project forward. We are excited about getting out there to see the site and to work with them in their process.

I know that one of the exciting things I have done this fall was to attend with the Minister of Highways and Public Works, where we arranged to have an elder do a land blessing for the Whistle Bend school and to enter into — ensuring that we are putting those really good intentions into the land and into the future of that school. We did that alongside Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council members. The building contractor — this was a meaningful process, so I am excited about what Kluane will do in terms of how they will launch their project, and I am sure that it will be significant.

So, I really look forward to putting these really careful intentions into infrastructure builds that we do and to do things in a different way. That is certainly my commitment and our government's commitment to really embrace truth and reconciliation. This project is one of the biggest signals toward reconciliation and one that we are excited to deliver on. So, more to come — thank you for the questions.

Mr. Kent: I wanted to move to the work being done at the Robert Service School. In this supplementary budget, the government is looking for an additional \$2.4 million to bring the total budget for that school in this fiscal year to \$6.4 million. I understand that work has recently started on it, so I have just a couple questions for the minister.

I am curious about the scope of the project — why it changed so much. The budget has gone up significantly. I believe that it was originally \$2 million when there were some renovations being done, and there was mould discovered, so it changed from a renovation to a replacement. That budget was \$4 million, as tabled in May when the government tabled their budget after the election, and now it has gone up to \$6.4 million for this fiscal year.

I'm curious if the minister can tell us if they are confident that the entire \$6.4 million will be able to be spent in the current fiscal year and why the scope has changed so much, which has changed the budget in such a way.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thanks for the question. This has been a work in progress for sure. I think that this is a really good example of how the Department of Education has worked with the school community, including Tr'ondek Hwëch'in, to really be involved in the visioning and design process of a four-classroom addition. It is not just a portable; that is why we have

moved from that language. The school in Dawson City is the heart of the community itself.

I had a chance to do a tour of the space. I thank the school officials and the administration for accommodating that. It gave me a good sense of what the space is like. I do have a good sense of that as a result of that tour and taking the time to meet with everyone and to meet with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and hear what their vision is. As the member opposite is aware, we have a 17.7 agreement with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in around their deep involvement in shaping education in the Robert Service School.

We continue to work with the school communities on planning for their short-, medium-, and long-term facility needs. We are certainly pleased that the work is well underway on the Robert Service School addition. The two old modular structures have now been decommissioned and removed from the site. The school community and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in have been involved in the visioning and design process for the four-classroom addition.

The public tender was issued for construction of the modular structure, and a contract has been awarded to Wildstone Construction. I know that there were some difficulties with attending the Legislature remotely during the day when we did this particular ministerial statement. I wasn't able to reply because I couldn't hear everything, but when I went back and listened to the transcripts, I became well aware of some of the comments that were made that day by the member opposite regarding this project. I think that the way that it was spoken about did no service to that school community and diminished it in some ways. I am glad that I have a chance here today to speak to it again.

I note that the member opposite made some comments around the previous minister in terms of her not moving forward with a local contractor because the type of modular was not available by a local contractor. This project has changed. It is an addition, and it is being done by Wildstone Construction. I want to clarify that for the record because I think that it is important that we are clear with Yukoners and really hold up our school communities. This is a good news story for that community. One of the great things about it — and the reason the scope has changed — is because we really visioned with the community and determined what the needs are. The cost of the project has increased. The great news is that Canada — these are all recoverable dollars. This is part of our supplementary budget that we have brought forward, so I thank you for your question regarding the supplementary budget. I was wondering if I would get very many of them. Now we've had two in a row, so thank you for that.

The excavation is now underway to put the foundation in place, and construction will continue over the winter. The expansion is anticipated to reach substantial completion by March 2022. This additional learning space and the administrative spaces will meet the current needs of the school. We will continue to work with the school community on longer term planning. It allows for the early kindergarten discussion to continue with the community because it will help us to address the space needs that the school currently has. Again, I had the

chance to see the structure of the classrooms and I have a really good understanding of that, and I know that the deputy minister does as well.

We will continue to work in that collaborative way with the community. I had great discussions with a lot of folks in Dawson over the summer on two separate occasions when I was able to have direct discussions with folks around space needs in the community.

I'm happy to continue to talk about this project. It's an important one for us, and it's meeting a huge need for the Dawson City community and the Robert Service School community.

Chair: Do members wish to take a 10-minute recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 10 minutes.

Recess

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Dixon: I would like to pick up on some questions that I had with regard to the early learning and childcare system and some of the changes brought in, in the new program over the last year. I will start with some broader ones and then dig into a few specifics.

The first question I have is a general question with regard to the model that the Yukon has chosen for this. I know that it has been determined, in part, by influence from Canada, as they are providing a significant amount of the funding, but I had heard previously, before the election, the government talk about their desire to follow what they referred to as the "Québec model" of early learning and childcare.

I think, for a lot of the folks, that's a reasonable decision to make, that the Québec model is one that has a fair amount of support in a lot of the literature about childcare in the country. However, I should note that the Québec model is not without its challenges and not without its issues. In particular, what we have seen develop in Québec over the last few years has been a fairly significant degree of stratification within their early learning system where there are a number of different tiers. Of course, the marquee tier is the CPEs that are run by the Québec government, les centres de la petite enfance. Those are the subsidized daycare spaces that are run by the government.

The problem with those is that there are extremely long wait times to get into those. The wait times for those spaces are very long. I have heard of families having their children going from zero to four and the entire time being on those wait-lists. What has cropped up is a number of other tiers below the regulated ones. What that means is a whole other shadow, or parallel, system of daycares in Québec.

I don't raise those as a criticism of this government's decision to follow Québec's model. I think that there is a lot of

good that Québec achieved as well. I guess my question is: Has the government given any thought to measures that they can take, or things that they can do, to avoid some of the more negative aspects of the Québec system cropping up in Yukon?

As we build the system essentially from the ground up, if we can give some thought to some of those more negative outcomes that have occurred in Québec and try to address them at the early stage in our system before they become an issue, as they have been in Québec —

For instance, I note that in Québec, the number of spaces that are provided through those CPEs represent only about a third of the spaces in Québec. Two-thirds of the spaces are then either in for-profit or unregulated childcare spaces. There is a lot to be lauded in the Québec model, but there are some significant challenges, and I think, if we're going to follow that road, it would be wise to think about some of those challenges and how we might address them here.

I would be interested to hear what the minister has to say about that and whether or not there are some changes or unique features that we can add in that will avoid the more unfortunate outcomes that have come about as a result of the Québec model.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thanks for the question. To continue on with the discussion around early learning and childcare in Yukon, again, this has been a really important initiative for our government. The new universal program focuses on three key areas: affordability, accessibility, and quality.

I want to say thanks for bringing up the Québec model. In the early days, that is where we were focusing a lot of our attention, but I can assure the member opposite that we have a made-in-Yukon model, and we have learned from other models across the country.

In terms of access to funding under the universal program, it is applied the same for all licensed childcare programs. I want to start with that. I am not sure if the member opposite was able to hear my opening comments. I went deeper into First Nation- and privately operated centres — that it is accessible across the board.

Keeping in mind those three areas — affordability, accessibility, and quality — that is where we have learned from other models, particularly on the quality aspect of it.

The new universal program reduces parent fees, as we know, by \$700 per child per month, under the affordability for full-time participation in licensed childcare programs, and has a flexible, pro-rated chart for reducing parent fees for those in part-time licensed programs. Parent fee increases are capped to ensure that parent fees remain affordable. We are working toward achieving \$10-a-day childcare and putting more disposable income into the hands of families.

Regarding accessibility, our goal is to increase the number of daycare and childcare spaces available. This has been a huge focus for us. One of the points that we worked really hard on with Canada when we were negotiating our agreement was to ensure that we would be able to continue to support for-profit centres. Our Yukon dollars are going toward supporting for-profit centres. Canada's dollars will go for not-for-profit centres, so we will be able to accommodate the needs of

communities. Economic Development and others taking that one-government approach are working with various communities right now to help them to establish these quality childcare services in our communities.

We are ensuring that childcare programs can be accessible to all Yukoners as costs to families have been significantly reduced. We are providing parents and guardians with more choices if they want to work outside of the home.

In terms of the quality — and this is where it gets into, I think, some of the questioning that the member opposite has brought forward around what has happened with some of the unintended outcomes of the Québec model. Again, we have learned from that. We have had that opportunity to learn from other models. I think that others will learn from us now in terms of where we are at.

The government provides funding to operators to support them in developing high-quality early learning environments through wage enhancement and quality enhancement funding. The new program provides a minimum wage of over \$30 an hour to fully qualified educators. These are some of the highest wages in Canada right now, so investments in early childhood educators will improve the quality of programming through enhanced training and retention strategies. This provides children an opportunity for learning and development in the early years and provides a continuum in a child's education.

I just want to point out that the University of Toronto Atkinson Centre identified Yukon as the new leader in early learning and childcare on May 20, 2021. I think that points to the fact that we have learned from others. We are looking forward to having discussions with our counterparts from across the country. Minister Gould is certainly asking Yukon to share the experience that we have had and to help to inform other jurisdictions as they look to establish a model that may be similar to ours or may take from what we have done or what Québec has done or others. We have certainly had the advantage of learning from others and look forward to helping other jurisdictions establish this because it will make a stronger country. I know that this is a key mandate for the federal government.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's response there. I would just take this opportunity to flag that there were a number of challenges, not just with the model, but with the speed at which the government of the day in the late 1990s adopted the model. That is just something to keep in mind.

One of the things that the government did do in the early 2000s under the Jean Charest government was to expand the tax credit available to those parents who were not in the regulated system. I am aware that the Yukon government is looking at the development of a tax credit in a similar concept. I am wondering if the minister can provide us an update on the development of a tax credit in relation to childcare expenses and what the parameters of that tax credit could look like.

While I am on my feet, I will also add what will probably be my other last question, which is just an update from the minister on Watson Lake. I know that Watson Lake had initially not opted into the system that the government had put forward and instead wished to stay on the rural sustainability

model that they were on previously, although I am given to understand that perhaps they are reconsidering that and are either in negotiations or have completed negotiations to join in the system.

Those are the two questions that I have for the minister now.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will bring information back on the question. I know that we are trying to get to another item on the agenda today, but I will endeavour to bring back more information on the tax credit. Maybe the member opposite and I can have some discussion to just clearly understand — I just want to make sure — outside of the Sitting today.

I will move quickly to the rural sustainability project and I will try to move through quickly. As of September 1, 2021, all licensed operators in Yukon, with the exception of the Watson Lake daycare, are participating in the new Yukon universal early learning and childcare program. The Watson Lake daycare opted to continue to participate in the rural sustainability pilot program.

Recently, staff from the Early Learning and Child Care unit met with Watson Lake daycare officials, and they have indicated that they would like to move to a new universal early learning childcare model that will meet their unique needs by the new year. It's great that our officials continue to work with folks.

One last thing I'll say on this particular area, just so we can be clear about the differences, is that in July 2021, licensed childcare centres signed on to the Yukon's universal childcare funding model. I think that the good news is that the Watson Lake daycare, in early days, chose not to be part of the Yukon universal childcare, but our officials and our department continue to work with them and would continue to support them under the rural sustainability project. However, they're now working toward opting in, and we'll continue to support them in whatever way we can.

I'm looking forward to having direct discussions with folks from the daycare as well. I have done that with other communities and would certainly be looking for that opportunity when we're able to travel more freely within the territory and in the comfort of the rural communities.

I will endeavour to bring more information back on the other question.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education?

Seeing none, we'll proceed to line-by-line debate.

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 3, Department of Education, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 3, Department of Education, cleared or carried

Deputy Chair: The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 3, Department of Education, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$13,216,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$119,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$13,335,000 agreed to

Department of Education agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 6, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021)*.

Do members wish to take a five-minute recess to allow the officials to take their place?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for five minutes.

Recess

Deputy Chair: Order, please. I will call Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill No. 6: Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021) — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 6, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021)*.

Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: First of all, I would like to take the opportunity to welcome back Jeff Simons and Sheri Hogeboom from the Department of Justice. They are the officials here to support this debate. I appreciate them being here. Thanks so much for your support and for helping members opposite as well as me with any questions that might be asked going forward.

I do not recall how much time I have, but it's a few minutes. I would like to just go back to one of the questions near the end of our previous debate about firearms, in particular, and the concerns brought forward with respect to that by the Official Opposition. My response was shortened based on our debate time, and I will just take a moment to respond. I am pleased to have that opportunity.

As I mentioned previously, the tabled amendment to the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* expands the scope of illegal activities. The safer communities and neighbourhoods unit — or what we call the “SCAN unit”, which is a pretty common acronym here in this debate and in the Yukon — can investigate to include activities related to child sexual exploitation, criminal organizations, and firearms. That is what is before the House — and the opportunity to continue that debate.

With the proposed amendment, the Government of Yukon is taking steps to continue supporting safe and healthy

communities wherein the possession or use and trade of illegal firearms, organized crime, and child sexual exploitation does not exist. To be clear, this government sees the amendments before us today as necessary changes that respond to changing criminal and social dynamics here in the Yukon.

I had the opportunity to recently meet with the RCMP here in the territory. We had a great discussion about a number of issues, not the least of which was the changing dynamics of criminal activity here in the territory, how they are seeing that change over the course of the last number of years, and how they are seeing it change over the time period of COVID — so since March 2020. Their emphasis certainly was on the concepts of trying to address organized crime with respect to drug dealing here in the territory and about the drug pipeline that comes from British Columbia and is more and more tainted with drugs that kill people, frankly. We have seen evidence of that in the numbers that have just come out from the chief coroner with respect to the opioid crisis here in the territory. I certainly thank her for her guidance and for her perspective on the opioid crisis, the difficult job that she does for Yukoners every day, and the support that she provides to Yukon families facing this kind of devastating loss.

There is no question in the conversation that I had with the chief superintendent and senior officials at the RCMP here in the territory that organized crime and drug dealing has taken its toll here in the territory and has increased significantly over the last number of years. I want to emphasize once more — and I am really trying to emphasize this because I know that this isn't the perspective of some of the members opposite and certainly of the Official Opposition — in response to comments made by one of the members opposite, that the lawful purchase, possession, use, storage, and transportation of firearms are activities that are not captured by the proposed amendments here before us.

The member opposite will tell Yukoners differently; he has done so, and he is wrong. If his party is not going to support these amendments to the SCAN act because of his interpretation, or their interpretation, of these changes, they are also wrong.

I urge them to reconsider this issue. I urge them to recognize that this issue is not open for interpretation. This is not about one interpretation of the changes versus another. They are not written so as to affect the lawful purchase, possession, use, storage, or transportation of firearms. They are simply not captured in these amendments.

I would like to recommend that all members of this Legislature support the passing of this *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021)* as a means to ensuring that the SCAN unit can, upon complaint — because their process is complaint-driven — investigate and take action on these matters, as needed, and in turn increase public safety in Yukon communities.

I know that this is a great concern in Yukon communities with respect to how we are going to stop drugs entering communities and how those drugs — tainted, as they often are, if not almost always — are causing the deaths of Yukoners. They just are, but the organized crime opportunity in SCAN

would allow them, upon complaint, to investigate those kinds of things. They don't have the authority to do that right now. If the complaint is about one person dealing drugs, they have some opportunity to do that, but if it is about how those drugs are moving into a community, including Whitehorse, and if it is about how those drugs are moving here with the assistance of organized crime — which we cannot be naïve about. We can't pretend that, in the Yukon, it's not a thing. We cannot pretend that, in the Yukon, we are not being affected by the increased drug trafficking into this territory from places like Vancouver and Toronto — that it is done in an organized way, in a criminal organization, and that they are sending individuals here to infiltrate our communities, to start a drug trade, and to continue that drug trade.

That is real. This is a tool that we can use to help citizens of this territory, in the event that they observe such things, that they choose to make a complaint, and that the activity is causing a community to be unsafe. The criteria in the SCAN act does not permit investigations without those criteria being met. I know that I am taking time to emphasize this, but I feel strongly that these are changes that will assist SCAN and ultimately assist the RCMP in addressing these kinds of issues that do affect small and large communities here in the territory.

I don't know if I can say enough — and there is not often an opportunity here in this Legislative Assembly to talk about this unsavory situation in which Yukoners find themselves when they are trying to face things like the opioid trade and the drug trade here in the territory.

I appreciate the time today, but lastly, I just want to commit to the conversation that I have had with the Leader of the Third Party with respect to a full review of the SCAN act. It is nearly 20 years old. There has not been such a review — 16 and a bit — but, once you start a review, it will take a few years by the time that can happen. I have committed to doing that with the Leader of the Third Party. I have committed to returning this legislation to this Legislature to do such a thing, and I have committed to beginning a review without that change being put in the act by 2023. I have committed to that in writing, and I want to make sure that it is on the record here today.

So, I appreciate the opportunity to have clarified these issues. I am happy to answer questions with respect to this bill.

Ms. White: I can't help but notice that the gallery is full of firefighters, and this will be the only opportunity that I can acknowledge that they are there. I am glad that this time I don't have to tell you why I am not voting in favour of something, because that is not going to be the case.

I just wanted to make sure that I also acknowledge that there were discussions with the Minister of Justice. It is important to note that the SCAN legislation came forward in 2006 and the times have changed. I appreciate the highlighting of why these changes are coming through, but I also think that it is really important that this piece of legislation, which has so much reach and can have so much power, does not have a review clause.

So, the minister has committed in writing and has committed on the floor that there will be an amendment brought forward in the spring to add a five-year review clause. I think

that this is really important, and there was the acknowledgement that, if it was possible, we would have worked on doing it this Fall Sitting.

I want to thank the minister for that. It's important that we all work together to make legislation stronger, and that review clause will make it stronger. There is also the commitment that it will be reviewed in 2023. I just also want to say that the NDP is committed to that, as is the Yukon Party, because 2023 is a ways in the future, at that point in time.

With that, I thank the minister and the officials for their time.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further debate on Bill No. 6, *entitled Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021)*?

Mr. Cathers: Just as we draw to a close, I do want to correct the minister and note that 2006, when the act was put in, was 15 years ago, not 20 years ago.

I largely addressed the issues that we have with this legislation earlier, so I'm not going to spend a lot of time restating them. I would just note for the record that we do object to the lack of public consultation on that. That is our single biggest concern regarding this. While we agree that the original SCAN legislation has been useful, it also does set a lower standard than the criminal standard in going after activity. It is something that, when expansion of those powers is being considered, we think that it's very important to give Yukoners the opportunity to weigh in with their views and that there should be a full act review.

Contrary to what the minister indicated, the legislation itself does cover the very same firearms that were purchased as unrestricted weapons, but due to the Trudeau government's order-in-council passed last year on May 1, they have now been deemed prohibited weapons. So, this is a subject of concern for a number of Yukoners — about whether the territorial government will be assisting the federal government as part of the so-called "gun buyback" that is, in fact, confiscation by another name.

Again, we will not be supporting the legislation for those reasons, but I want to emphasize that some of the other parts of this amendment, had they been subject to public consultation, we would very likely be supporting.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I noted the other day — but I think it's important to add — that there was no public consultation with respect to this matter coming forward. This is advice from authorities here in the territory about criminal activity that occurs here. It is advice from the experience of the SCAN unit, which is complete with very well-experienced investigators, that these are activities that are occurring here in the territory, that these are activities that exist in many of the other jurisdictions in their SCAN-type legislation, and that these are activities that individual Yukoners are complaining about, but there is no authority for the SCAN unit to ascertain whether or not it is affecting the safety of the neighbourhood and to then proceed with an investigation if that is so warranted.

All of this is to say that there was no public consultation because this amendment is to add three very serious criminal activities to the roster of things that can be complained about,

that are occurring in Yukon communities, and that might need to be investigated through this process.

I can also indicate that there is a lower standard, as the member opposite notes, with respect to the criminal standard of "beyond a reasonable doubt", because there are no criminal consequences in this legislation.

Let's be clear. This is about property; it's not about people's actions. It's about the opportunity to make communities safer across the territory, and it does not affect an individual with respect to a criminal sanction. It could affect an individual who is carrying out some of these activities and causing neighbourhoods to be unsafe, but it is property-related. It does not carry a criminal sanction, so it doesn't have a criminal standard of "beyond a reasonable doubt". I think that we have had the opportunity through this debate so far to make that clear. I think that it is incredibly important.

I am disappointed that the members opposite in the Official Opposition won't support this because I do think that we have committed to a review, so we will hear from Yukoners about the activity here with respect to how SCAN operates and to the effects and from people who might have a different point of view with respect to how we can improve this legislation over the 16 years of what has been this legislation — or since 2006. I don't think we need to argue about months, but frankly, by the time a review was done, it will be close to 20 years.

Legislation like this, which reflects the rights of individuals in the community and is designed to help keep our neighbourhood safe, is something that should be reviewed. The opportunity to do that has been brought forward.

I really want to indicate how much I appreciate the conversations that I have had with the Leader of the Third Party and the good idea brought forward.

We have run, since 2016, this government on the basis that good ideas come from everywhere. I agree with the Leader of the Third Party that the opportunity for us to work together makes legislation stronger in this Legislature and for Yukoners. I'm disappointed that the Official Opposition can't see their way clear to supporting this legislation. As I've said, we're adding three very serious criminal activities to the opportunity for SCAN to investigate and make neighbourhoods safer.

Child sexual exploitation — I can't see my way clear to not being able to support that. Illegal operation with respect to firearms and organized crime, which I have said quite clearly is a serious problem here and is something that is not going to go away —

Deputy Chair: Order, please.

Termination of Sitting as per Standing Order 76(1)

Deputy Chair: The time has reached 5:00 p.m. on this, the 31st sitting day of the 2021 Fall Sitting.

Standing Order 76(1) states, "On the sitting day that the Assembly has reached the maximum number of sitting days allocated for that Sitting pursuant to Standing Order 75, the Chair of the Committee of the Whole, if the Assembly is in Committee of the Whole at the time, shall interrupt proceedings at 5:00 p.m. and, with respect to each Government Bill before

Committee that the Government House Leader directs to be called, shall:

“(a) put the question on any amendment then before the Committee;

“(b) put the question, without debate or amendment, on a motion moved by a Minister that the bill, including all clauses, schedules, title and preamble, be deemed to be read and carried;

“(c) put the question on a motion moved by a Minister that the bill be reported to the Assembly; and

“(d) when all bills have been dealt with, recall the Speaker to the Chair to report on the proceedings of the Committee.”

It is the duty of the Chair to now conduct the business of Committee of the Whole in the manner directed by Standing Order 76(1). The Chair will now ask the Government House Leader to indicate which of the government bills now before Committee of the Whole should be called.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Deputy Chair, the government directs that Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*, Bill No. 6, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021)*, and Bill No. 8, entitled *Workers’ Safety and Compensation Act*, be called at this time.

Bill No. 202: Second Appropriation Act 2021-22 — continued

Deputy Chair: The Committee will now deal with Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

The Chair will now recognize the Member for Klondike for the purpose of moving a motion pursuant to Standing Order 76(1)(b).

Hon. Mr. Silver: Deputy Chair, I move that all clauses, schedules, and the title of Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be deemed to be read and carried.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Klondike that all clauses, schedules, and the title of Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be deemed to be read and carried.

As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question. Are you agreed?

Motion agreed to

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$59,079,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$17,392,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$76,471,000 agreed to

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to

Schedules A and B agreed to

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Silver: Deputy Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*, without amendment.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Klondike that the Chair report Bill No. 202, entitled *Second*

Appropriation Act 2021-22, without amendment. As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question. Are you agreed?

Motion agreed to

Bill No. 6: Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021) — continued

Deputy Chair: The Committee will now deal with the *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021)*. The Chair will now recognize the Member for Riverdale South for the purpose of moving a motion pursuant to Standing Order 76(1)(b).

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, I move that all clauses and the title of Bill No. 6, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021)*, be deemed to be read and carried.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale South that all clauses and the title of Bill No. 6, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021)*, be deemed to be read and carried.

As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question. Are you agreed?

Motion agreed to

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to

Title agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 6, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021)*, without amendment.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale South that the Chair report Bill No. 6, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021)*, without amendment. As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question. Are you agreed?

Motion agreed to

Bill No. 8: Workers’ Safety and Compensation Act — continued

Deputy Chair: The Committee will now deal with Bill No. 8, entitled *Workers’ Safety and Compensation Act*.

The Chair will now recognize the Member for Whitehorse West for the purpose of moving a motion pursuant to Standing Order 76(1)(b).

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Deputy Chair, I move that all clauses and the title of Bill No. 8, entitled *Workers’ Safety and Compensation Act*, be deemed to be read and carried.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse West that all clauses and the title of Bill No. 8, entitled *Workers’ Safety and Compensation Act*, be deemed to be read and carried.

As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question. Are you agreed?

Motion agreed to

Clauses 1 to 226 agreed to

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Deputy Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 8, entitled *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*, without amendment.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse West that the Chair report Bill No. 8, entitled *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*, without amendment. As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question. Are you agreed?

Motion agreed to

Deputy Chair: As the government bills identified by the Government House Leader have now been decided upon, it is my duty to rise and report to the House.

Speaker resumes the Chair

Termination of Sitting as per Standing Order 76(2)

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

May the House have a report from the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Committee of the Whole has also considered Bill No. 6, entitled *Act to Amend to Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021)*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Finally, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 8, entitled *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Termination of Sitting as per Standing Order 76(2)

Speaker: Standing Order 76(2)(d) states, "On the sitting day that the Assembly has reached the maximum number of sitting days allocated for that Sitting pursuant to Standing Order 75, the Speaker of the Assembly, when recalled to the Chair after the House has been in Committee of the Whole, shall:

"(d) with respect to each Government Bill standing on the Order Paper for Third Reading and designated to be called by the Government House Leader,

"(i) receive a motion for Third Reading and passage of the bill, and

"(ii) put the question, without debate or amendment, on that motion."

I shall, therefore, ask the Government House Leader to indicate which of the government bills now standing on the Order Paper for third reading should be called.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, the government directs that Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act*

2021-22, Bill No. 6, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021)*, and Bill No. 8, entitled *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*, be called at this time.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 202: *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 202, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now read a third time and do pass. As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question to the House. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Ms. Clarke: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 10 yea, eight nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 202 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 202 has passed this House.

Bill No. 6: *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021)* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 6, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 6, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and*

Neighbourhoods Act (2021), be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 6, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021)*, be now read a third time and do pass. As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall put the question to the House. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Ms. Clarke: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 10 yea, eight nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for third reading of Bill No. 6 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 6 has passed this House.

Bill No. 8: Workers' Safety and Compensation Act — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 8, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Mostyn.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 8, entitled *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board that Bill No. 8, entitled *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for third reading of Bill No. 8 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 8 has passed this House.

We are now prepared to receive the Commissioner of Yukon, in her capacity as Lieutenant Governor, to grant assent to bills which have passed this House.

Commissioner Bernard enters the Chamber announced by her Aide-de-Camp

ASSENT TO BILLS

Commissioner: Please be seated.

Speaker: Madam Commissioner, the Assembly has, at its present session, passed certain bills to which, in the name and on behalf of the Assembly, I respectfully request your assent.

Clerk: *Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act (2021); Act to Amend the Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act (2021); Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021); Act to Amend the Family Property and Support Act (2021); Workers' Safety and Compensation Act; Act to Amend the Cannabis Control and Regulation Act (2021); Act to Amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021); Second Appropriation Act 2021-22.*

Commissioner: I hereby assent to the bills as enumerated by the Clerk.

Thank you, members, for your work this session. I wish you a well-deserved rest. On January 1, 2022, I invite you to visit the Commissioner of Yukon's Facebook page to see our 2022 levee video where we will present the 2021 Order of Yukon inductees, the Bravery Award, the Public Volunteer Service Award, and other awards presented during this year. I know you will join me in congratulating these deserving Yukoners.

Merci encore de votre travail durant cette session, and enjoy your time off.

Commissioner leaves the Chamber

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

Before I adjourn the Fall Sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, I have a few brief comments. I would like to extend my thanks on behalf of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, and the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole and on behalf of all Members of the Legislative Assembly to Clerk Dan Cable, Deputy Clerk Linda Kolody, Clerk of Committees Allison Lloyd, Director of Administration, Finance, and Systems Helen Fitzsimmons, Operations Manager Brenda McCain-Armour, Finance and Operations Clerk Lyndsey Amundson, as well as Sergeant-at-Arms Karina Watson and Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms Joe Mewett, who have all provided invaluable support to all MLAs and their staff in order for all of us to continue to do the important work that we are sent here to do on behalf of all Yukoners.

As well, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the skilled team at Hansard for their timely and accurate service and all of the other background staff and contractors who kept this Legislative Assembly operating.

I would also commend the hard-working civil servants who delivered service to Yukoners and support to all of us, as members, in our work. I wish Members of the Legislative Assembly all the best for the winter. We have had another difficult year because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many Yukoners have suffered financially, physically, and emotionally from the effects of the pandemic. I hope that all of us can look forward to a better year next year.

Happy holidays to all and all the best in the new year. Thank you very much.

As the House has reached the maximum number of sitting days permitted for this Fall Sitting and the House has completed consideration of the designated legislation, it is the duty of the Chair to declare that this House now stands adjourned.

The House adjourned at 5:26 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled December 2, 2021:

35-1-34

Health Care Insurance Programs — Health Services - Fiscal Years 2011-12 to 2020-21— Annual Report April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021 (McPhee)

35-1-35

Yukon Public Service Labour Relations Board Annual Report 2020-2021 (Streicker)

35-1-36

Yukon Teachers Labour Relations Board Annual Report 2020-2021 (Streicker)

35-1-37

Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Annual Report 2020-2021 (McLean)

The following legislative returns were tabled December 2, 2021:

35-1-19

Response to Written Question No. 1 re: court cases involving the Government of Yukon and Written Question No. 2 re: legislative drafting (McPhee)

35-1-20

Response to Written Question No. 6 re: Whistle Bend Place (McPhee)

35-1-21

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to general debate on Vote 53, Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — Vangorda (Streicker)

35-1-22

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. White related to general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — clearing along Robert Service Way (Streicker)

35-1-23

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Dixon related to general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — carbon credits (Streicker)

35-1-24

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. White related to general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — public information sessions (Streicker)

35-1-25

Response to oral question from Ms. Van Bibber re: school zone safety (Clarke, N.)

35-1-26

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. White related to general debate on Vote 3, Education, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — Old Crow staffing (McLean)

35-1-27

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to general debate on Vote 3, Education, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — bus arrival standards (McLean)

35-1-28

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to general debate on Vote 3, Education, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — bus arrival standards (McLean)

35-1-29

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to general debate on Vote 3, Education, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — educational assistants (McLean)

35-1-30

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to general debate on Vote 3, Education, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — staffing reporting tool (McLean)

35-1-31

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. White related to general debate on Vote 3, Education, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — staff vaccination attestation (McLean)

35-1-32

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. White related to general debate on Vote 3, Education, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — adult learning supports and programs (McLean)

The following documents were filed December 2, 2021:

35-1-38

Yukon Government Public Service Commission
2 December 2021 Employee Attestations (Streicker)

35-1-39

Yukon Party Support for Extending Cancer Presumption to Wildland Firefighters, letter re (dated November 30, 2021) from Kalin Pallett, President, Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon to Currie Dixon, Leader of the Official Opposition (Mostyn)

35-1-40

Bill No. 8, *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*, letter re (dated November 25, 2021) from Frederick Koe, Chair, Board of Directors, Yukon First Nations Wildfire, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (Mostyn)

35-1-41

Change of clause 94, Division 4, Bill No. 8, *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*, letter re (dated November 17, 2021) from Chad Thomas, CEO, Yukon First Nations Wildfire, to Kate White, Leader of the Third Party (White)

The following written question was filed December 2, 2021:

Written Question No. 13

Re: clearance times at the Fraser border crossing (Kent)